JOHN HALL WHEELOCK

POEMS

1911 - 1936

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Books by John Hall Wheelock

POEMS, 1911–1936
THE BRIGHT DOOM
THE BLACK PANTHER
DUST AND LIGHT
LOVE AND LIBERATION
THE BELOVÈD ADVENTURE
THE HUMAN FANTASY

Charles Scribner's Sons

POEMS

1911-1936

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CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS · NEW YORK
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A

To Van Wyck Brooks

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

For this selection the author has brought together, from his various volumes and from recent unpublished work, the poems he wishes to preserve. With a few exceptions, the poems are grouped under the titles of the books in which they first appeared. The Table of Contents will reveal certain lesser groupings not indicated in the text. The poems which make up the final section, New Poems, have not hitherto been published in book form, with the exception of "Salutation," the concluding poem.

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THE HUMAN FANTASY

(1911)

TO M. Z.

I see you stand before me,
Bizarre, absurd, enchanting,
(The swinging silver satchel,
The dear, ridiculous dress),

A little dauntless figure,
Half lost in the enormous
Gay picture-hat bowed forward
Across the eager face.

Its single feather trembles
Against the dusk. Beyond you,
The squalid, huddled city,
With many a flaring lamp,

Looms sinister and haunting,
—The waste that bred and bore you—
A mockery heartbreaking,
A menace and a joke.

But you stand all unknowing,
Glad-hearted, well, and reckless,
Magnanimous and merry,
My lost one, O my youth!

LOVE AND THE CITY

PROLOGUE

You came to me, and with yourself you brought
The wings of unborn angels hovering near,
Of future lovelinesses, urgencies,
Vigors and longings laboring to be;
Borne in the glad defiance of your breast,
The forward urge and passionate pulse of life.

With the wide arms of love spread out to save
You took me, full of bounty, unawares,
Luring me back out of the woods of dream
Where long I lay, into the ruddy noon
And blinding beauty; savage and sweet and strong,
Drenched all my sadness in the exuberant joy,
Bowed down my dream with the athletic truth,
Humbling, to the dear practicalness of yourself
And the great primal sacrifice, my pain.

Then, at your healing breast, the imagined pang
And wilful anguish died, all love-subdued
By the dear, vehement loveliness whose weight
Hung at the heart and crowded out its woe;
Crushing all pain of self out with delight
Of your own influent sanity, all death
With the warm recklessness of lavish life,
You lured my being to fulfill itself.

So was it then. Now that, beyond the slope,
Out of your reach, my heart into the vale
Of endless dreams, turned homeward, takes its way,
I feel you, like the voice of one afar—
Gracious to heal, all powerless to save,
Wanton and well—exuberantly beyond,

From the glad lands of love, cry out to me
For the last time, to call me back again—
Oh, back again, incorrigible and kind,
To the old loveliness and dear delight,
The rhythmic abandon of the barbaric joy.

I: FIRST MEETING

The ponderous glory of the radiant noon
  Poured through the streets, a molten fire ablaze;
  On alley and parkway hung a vibrant haze,
The city's voice came low, as in a swoon.

Yet thunders of her traffic, east and west,
  Sounded like waters on a distant shore—
  And, in the silences, forevermore
The laborings of a titanic breast.

Through square and street, like living pulses thrust
  Down narrowing veins as from a central motion,
  Surged, wave on wave, the huddled human ocean,
—The joy—the pain—the holiness—the lust:

Artist and laborer, harlot, fop, and sage,
  The shrewd old peddler with the wooden leg,
  Gay cavalier and limping hobble-peg,
The eyes of childhood and the brows of age—

A glorious flood, of clear and cleansing length,
  Vigorous from the buffet and the strife,
  The brine of the reality of life,
And filled with laughter and eternal strength—

A flood of waters, pitiless and splendid,
  To bathe the pain out of the single soul;
  All little sorrow and all selfish dole,
All single effort and all dreams unended,

All sickliness, drowned out as in a sea
  Of careless kindness and of power immense,
  The carnal buoyance and the common sense
Of sane and sensual humanity.

So broke this beauty on him for a space,
  Justled among the shoulders of the crowd;
  When, suddenly, as from a breaking cloud,
Out of the throng rose the belovèd face.

II: EAST SIDE

In the spring, on the pavements of the city,
  The little children play marbles, and laugh and shout—
  Their laughter is drowned by the city all about;
But they laugh back, regardless of the city,
  And clap their hands, and shout.

In the sunlight fading from the alleys,
  The braided hair and the short hair are bowed
  Over a few soiled marbles; a watching crowd
Circles them, in the noisy, dusty alleys,
  Where the close heads are bowed.

From the river in the distance flowing,
  The whistles murmur—the tired souls of men
  Call to each other over the waters again;
Over the river in the sunlight flowing,
  Answer the souls of men.

When lamps on the sidewalks glimmer,
  Along the roofs the sky still burns with day—
  A little group watches them where they play;
And in the distance the long waters glimmer
  With the receding day.

III: TONY'S

Within the tiny restaurant they sat,
  He whispering many a word;
She in the mirror parleyed with her hat
  Gravely, and hardly heard.

Till, in the hall, the ridiculous orchestra
  With a waltz whirled round and round,
Dreamily to and fro began to stir
  Her head, to the dim sound—
  The waltz whirled round and round.

And the canary, silent on the wall,
  Trilled through the smoky air;
The clever bird, it never sang at all,
  He said, till she was there.

Now she was silent, not knowing what to say,
  Adorable, dignified—
And strove to make her eyes seem far away,
  Turning her head aside.
  The music died.

"O sweet, now I am happy, now at last,"
  So fiercely (her laugh rang clear)—
"O sweet, before my happiness is past,
  Kiss me, and kill me here!"

Then suddenly, lifting lips in quick regret
  From the wine's brink divine,
She leaned toward him, and his lips were wet
  With perfume and with wine.

IV: STREET-CAR

The soft, gray garment of the rushing rain
  Veils the long streets and avenues afar;
  The passengers sit huddled in the car—
Slow drops slip wearily down the window-pane.

A funeral procession takes its way
  Across the tracks—the car stands still a space,
  All eyes are turned (and every anxious face)
Save hers, who laughs oblivious of delay—

Holding her baby close against her breast:
  The heart of love, too glad to comprehend,
  And life, at war with death until the end,
—The mother, throned serene amid the rest.

V: SUNDAY IN THE PARK

Untroubled by a cloud
The sun at noonday seemed to shine aloud
With radiant music, light
Lay like a garment, ponderous and bright,
On slope and winding lawn,
Casino and gay pagoda half withdrawn
Along the leafy dark—
On turret and minaret; through all the Park
Light, vibrant like a lyre,
Sounded all-golden, touched alike with fire
The old brass-band and the heads
Of the tulips round the formal garden-beds.

And lo, careless and strong,
To music and laughter, throng on surging throng,
Through alley and bright glade,

Through portal and promenade decked for parade,
Loosed, as if long repressed,
Like tangible laughter from one living breast,
Rippled the rhythmic crowd;
And, as wave chides with wave in the sea aloud,
So echoed, far around,
The blurred, sweet hum of tongues, a sleepy sound
In the vibrant noonday heat,
And far around, the noise of many feet
And ringing laughter—a glorious
Torrent of surging life, let loose uproarious
Down channels long denied,
A sheer, clear sweep of loveliness, deified
By the joy that makes men one,
Shot through with life and love and the living sun.

Drunk they were
With all the glory and the glittering air
Drawn down their veins like wine;
Earth seemed like heaven and that heaven divine,
And all things happy, only
The lions in caged rows lay mute and lonely—
Lay mute and sullen; they
From cage to cage observed them where they lay,
Or when with soundless stride
Paced the shagged terror and his tawny bride,
With fang and dripping lip;
Or the soft, wondering antelope would nip
And nudge her fondling hand;
Sweet for them arm in arm it was to stand
By the barred space that held
Juno's proud bird of beauty unparalleled,
With crest of golden stain,
And the most solemn reverence of his train,
Spread round him for delight,
Star-eyed, and colored like the twilit night.

Now from the monkeys' cage
Demonic cries rang, as of fiends in rage—
And sharp, ridiculous shrieks,
Raspingly; the warm sunlight on her cheeks
Flushed them like flame, her eyes
Flashed laughable and lovable surprise,
All seriousness, and when,
"Listen—" she cried, "oh, look—!" and turned again
With many an eager word,
Wounded with a sweet sense of things absurd,
Quick laughter cleft his heart,
Kindling her own and the hot blood to start,
Half between mirth and shame,
All up her temples in little waves of flame
And color.

Whirled and justled
In the tumultuous crowd that buzzed and bustled
All round them, drenched and drowned
In light and joy and color and clashing sound,
Drunk with each other's eyes,
They passed, as through a populous paradise;
Radiant and flushed and filled
With all the radiance that around them thrilled
In the garden of delights,
Of men, and birds, and beasts, and fabulous sights.

The Sunday mood
Filled all the Park with revel and laughter, strewed,
Like flowers in windy places,
(Sweeter than flowers) a hundred swaying faces
Along the walks and ways—
Gay faces, and gray faces gaunt with days,
Faces of nurse and maid
And camel-riding children half-afraid
Or bending from above,
Faces of loneliness, faces of love,

Faces of childish glee
Along the skirts of the menagerie—
Wide-eyed and wonder-eyed.

Wordless they wandered, drifting with the tide:
The rose upon her breast
Drooped like the day; yet not their hearts for rest
Hungered, nor ever tired,
For with the immortal ardor they were fired
Whose large and careless strength,
Through all glad breasts, through all the crowded length
Of the shifting pageant, flamed—
Bounteous and sensual and unashamed,
Idle, superb, and free—
The ardor of being, the sheer joy to be,
Whose vigor made forget,
Each heart, its separate weariness and fret;
Each heart, in the greater will
Of the general strength, refreshed and quickened still,
And with all hearts made one,
Shot through with life and love and the living sun.

VI: A PORTRAIT

A certain hint in her, of common sense,
  A practicalness, of all illusion void,
Stripping all facts of a futile eloquence—
  These were the traits his watchfulness enjoyed.

From struggles with the world of give-and-take,
  A very sagacious, incredulous hardihood
Shone forth in her—the eyes were wide awake
  And the lips gay, in many a reckless mood.

Swift moments of passion or tenderness, beguiled
  Out of a seeming compassionless carelessness,
Showed her part woman, part the eager child,
  But all glad courage and frank fearlessness:

Something half-animal, so strange and strong—
Like the wild-bird, that, when her lover sings,
Takes with sweet unconcern his holiest song,
And finds no sentiment in primal things.

VII: ON THE FERRY-BOAT

The ferry-boat into the waters dim
Slipped forward with a sound of churning foam;
Studded with stars, hung low the heaven's dome
Around them—and along the city's rim,

Over the shadowed river's murky flowing,
Glittered a million lights of starry sheen;
Sharp whiffs and ocean odors, salt and keen,
Swept up the east, and sullen whistles blowing

In from the sea-gate, from the ocean ways.
Past dock and dock, past lamp and flaring lamp,
They glided into the twilight chill and damp,
Over the waters, through the ghostly haze,

Over the lifting and the lapsing tide,
And left the city lying sleeplessly
At the soft bosom of the heaving sea,
At the bosom of the everlasting bride.

The silence and the engirdling solitude
Drew them together closer, more and more;
Never had he observed her thus before,
So grave and yet so merry was her mood,

So tender, yet so merry: all her speech
Was glad by turns and sad, like April weather—
Close, on the upper deck, they sat together,
Each lost within the happiness of each.

No less than if in an enchanted boat
  They had sought beyond the stars a fairy realm
  Of mosques and minarets, Love at the helm
And joys for oarsmen, on the waves afloat,

They were embarked and drifted on the stream
  Of night and waves, beyond the hand of day
  And all its cares—cut loose and cut away,
With steering prow, into the dusk of dream.

And now at some new wonder, as they went,
  Unveiled before them, with delight they sprang
  To scan the waters; now their laughter rang;
Now they sat wordless in a deep content.

Around them reached the gray and glimmering shore—
  Fortress and headland, tower and lamp of warning,
  The sea-road to the worlds beyond the morning,
Behind them, and the eternal stars before.

VIII: THE HARBOR

By gates of ocean and the seaward portal,
  Fortress and bastion—headlands of the world—
Gray walls and sea-sapped battlements and turrets,
  The weary wings of twilight are unfurled.

Under the gaunt and the windy clouds of morning,
  Over the wide wastes and the fields of sea,
Storm-signals, capes, and flashing promontories,
  Sirens, and bell-buoys rocking restlessly,

Slips the first ray, like a sword unsheathed, of sunrise—
  And all the terror of the dawn lies bare.
By channel and reef, by oozy flat and sand-bar,
  The seaward guns shine grim in the morning air.

Inland, by desolate dock and lapping water,
Sick scurf and scum rise lazily and fall,
Along the wharves; indolent, sucked, and drowsy,
Loom rotting fender-post and crumbling wall.

But, on the headland, the sweet, virgin city,
Mistress and guardian of the clamoring lands,
Looks seaward, with brave eyes, toward the nations—
Sleepless, a sword forever in her hands.

Holy and sacred! East and West salute her,
Clothed with the dawn and with the planets crowned—
Voices and gongs and horns beyond the morning,
Her myriad children on the wastes around.

IX: IN THE CATHEDRAL

Within the vaulted gloom the sullen reverberation
And inarticulate plaint of the world, like a voice that pleads,
The thunder of her wheels and worn preoccupation,
Throbbed into a peace, before the brow that bleeds—
The indomitable love, the dolorous consummation.

And the immortal Christ, the wounded dreamer, hung
Carven there, with arms of pain that seemed to yearn
Toward the great breast below, unwounded and unwrung,
The lips brimming with laughter, the hearts that beat and burn,
The wanton, bounteous lust, forever well and young.

She seemed, beside him sitting, as one afar might seem—
Lost in the general self, a symbol of the human;
Lovable and absurd by contrast with the Supreme,
Before the eternal Christ the everlasting woman,
Practical, filled with pity at the most dauntless dream.

And girdled by the throng as by a soundless ocean,
His heart thrilled to a sense of all humanity:
The grandeur, the low shame—tumultuous contra-motion—
A spirit rising, radiant, from its infirmity,
To the most starry effort and the austere devotion.

O dear and common world, in factory and in slum
Still nursing at the breast the wild and veering vision;
Incalculably brave, cruel, divine, and dumb,
Crowning the ages' toil with sensual indecision—
Mother, murd'ress, tomb, and womb, of Christs to come!

X: WEST SIDE

Down the stone valley, carven steep and straight,
Into the clouds the streets of twilight run—
That blend in molten bars about the sun—
Into the sunset and the evening's gate,

Re-opening on starred heaven. The first few
Flames of her holy chamber now are seen,
Above the flickering twilight's fields of green
And the pierced clouds, deep in the boundless blue.

The stately buildings loom along the dark—
The somber and stone desert all around:
In the whole world there is one only sound,
A cracked old organ wheezing from the Park;

'Mid the starred peace colossal and supreme,
Presumptuous, the only human voice,
Full of old tunes and ditties that rejoice
Half dolefully, and die. The houses dream.

XI: THE CITY AND THE THOUGHT OF HER

The city has many moods:
Centers of rolling life; and solitudes
By squalid and empty square;
Terrible reaches along the wharf-line bare;
Hours of peace and quiet;
Titanic moments when the roar and riot
Rage, like the thunder heard
'Twixt ponderous waters by the storm-wind stirred.

Out of these changes all,
One thought spoke to his heart—from the first call
Of whistles, at morning blown
Across her adamant wastes from zone to zone,
Satanic, when the spell
Of dawn makes the cleft gorges terrible,
And dimly through the street
Click the first hoof-heats—to the gigantic beat
Of her hammers in full sway,
The whirring of the machinery of the day;
The populous jubilation
Of manifold life, the clamorous consternation
Of struggle and strife, her streams
Poured forth at noon, the droning and the screams
Of motor and engine, still
Spoke to his heart one thought intelligible;
Riveted in his breast
With the riveting of girders, east and west—
And always, everywhere,
Rising, from all these forms, the thought of *her*.

No less when the noontide jangle
Dwindles into content—the drive and wrangle
And trampling of the crowd—
When only the huckster's voice is heard aloud

Through the long afternoon;
Or when, awakened as from a second swoon,
The city with delight
Tears off her robes of labor, and bare and bright,
With myriad lamps aflare,
Jewelled and crowned, into the evening air
Pours forth, weary but free,
Her myriad children, and fierce and breathlessly
Circulates love and lust,
Beauties that heal and leprosies that rust,
Splendors and crimes and shame—
The thought of *her* was uttered. From the flame
And flare of her pavilions
Blazing like lurid suns through her dominions,
Her dizzy and dreadful joy,
Her breathless raptures dazzling to destroy,
From the quest of man and woman,
From all the world of things sordid and human,
She, being human, seemed
To speak, through them, into his heart that dreamed.

And so,
When her tumultuous motions, to and fro,
Ebbed, and upon her floors
The thunder of weights and wheels; when darkening doors
Quieted for a space
The terrible bosom shaken to its base,
From the silent avenues then
The thought of *her* spoke to his heart again
All night, till, like the night's,
Faded at dawn the city's starry lights—
Till, like the planets', even,
Faded the luminous orbits of her heaven
Of traffic, in square and street;
Stamped on his heart with the stray harlot's feet
Down the stone desert; sent

Through all his soul with the last sound that went
Down the dusk, of the last car;
And sealed, at morning, with the morning-star.

XII: STARS

The shining city seems a central light
  Amid the radiance that the stars disperse,
  The populous city of the universe,
Scattered in gold pavilions through the night—

The constellated abodes of the Creation,
  A universal republic. At the core
  Of thronging suns and worlds, forevermore
She radiates a fiery jubilation.

She, too, is throned and whirled upon a star,
  With streets that front along eternity;
  She, too, is part, with the loneliest orb you see,
Of the radiant loveliness that flames afar.

XIII: PRESENTIMENT

The waiter's look, observant and discreet,
  'Mid glances from the crowded tables cast,
  Veiling a vile conjecture, as they passed
The restaurant door, into the lamp-lit street,

Sickened him sharply with a sudden fear
  That the gray moment to his spirit brought;
  Drowned, in the meanness of a sordid thought,
Her happy eyes, her laughter gay and dear.

Behind them closed the door: the music faded,
  Lost in the rumbling wheels that rattled by;
  In the hot, dusty twilight, dense and dry,
The joyless street lay colorless and jaded—

And the hunched beggar, huddled on the ground,
  Baring, for all the passing world to see,
  His mutilation and his misery,
Seemed one at heart with the drab dusk around.

By love more deep, part terror and part pity,
  Wakened from the light love with hurt surprise,
  He turned to her with other-seeing eyes—
They, arm in arm, descended through the city.

XIV: SUNDAY MORNING ON THE AVENUE

Be what you will,
The vast humanity is unaltered still—
Weary, or weak with shame,
Or buoyant with glad triumph—still the same
Pours on the human flood;
Carelessly, to the evil and the good,
The well and the wounded soul,
Her tireless and eternal beauties roll
As from re-quickening sources;
Like the springtime or the stars, the high, kind Forces
Make no division in twain,
But equally their bounty, in sweet disdain,
On all men born is shed.
On him who rises from the restful bed,
Or the bed of pain, on him
Fresh from the arms of love, or chambers dim
Of murder newly done,
The same humanity re-dawns: for none
Flags the eternal stress
Of labor and life; not with his weariness
She wearies, nor with his pain
Is wasted—but lo, careless and strong, again

Through street and shining square,
Radiant and regardless, everywhere
She pours a thousandfold,
Like the dawn across the world, her beauties as of old.

Here, down the avenue
The liquid sunlight runs like lightning through,
Look, how the Sunday throng
Ripples and sways and surges all along
The valley of stately walls—
Gay feathers and colors and tilted parasols,
Plumes nodding, side by side;
Through the dense street the carriages gleam and glide
Idly, with loitering wheels
And silver trappings, and on the air there steals
The sense and the delight
Of human joy and contentment. Bare and bright
Shines steeple by shining steeple,
Above the churches gushing a myriad people.

Two eager girls,
With hair down over the shoulder still in curls,
Pass on with laughing eyes;
The street is full of questionings and replies—
What lips are smiling there!
What wordless answerings thrill and fill the air,
And hints of marvellous things!
Over the tumult move with shadowing wings,
With brightening wings there move,
The light and the shadow of ecstasy and love.

Now at last
The single soul forgets her grief, in the vast
Gladness of mingling breath;
In the dear doom of all who pass toward death
And the shining miracle—

The brave humanity, dreamless, shrewd, and well—
Oh, in the general doom
Of all glad, sensual pulses toward the tomb
Fearlessly beating by,
Splendid it is to live, and glorious to die!

XV: DISCORDS

They walked together through the Park at twilight,
  The empty benches stood out cold and hard—
Now from the city the first arc-lights shone,
  And jewels on her forehead, a reward
For all her labors done.

The face of heaven was beautiful and breathless;
  Like prophets, shone the first stars in the west,
Like molten splendors in the haze around.
  Deep in his heart, deep in his very breast,
He felt a pang new-found.

When, like a ghost, a pitiful young harlot,
  Harried and haunted, passed them in the dusk,
And vanished, leaving tragic all the air—
  There, in the wake of perfume and of musk,
They kissed, he with a prayer.

XVI: OLD MADGE

Poor old Madge long years has gone
  Up and down this very street,
Selling matches to such as buy—
  Her heart is weary, and her feet.

The young, gay shop-girls laugh at her,
  Weaving sad words about her name,
And whispering behind her back
  Old scandals of immortal fame.

Her fading body, which is the tomb
  Of so much longing and regret,
Such fiery joy was wreaked upon,
  Old memories haunt, and mysteries, yet.

And still, within her sordid eyes,
  From many a wild, sweet night, there clings
Some fire of the old fierce joy,
  The memory of extravagant things—

And a stray word or smile will draw,
  Perchance, into the withered face,
The look that once some lover saw,
  A wild regret of the old grace.

Yet oftenest she will not lift
  The weary irony of her eyes,
Much kindness she has known before,
  And she is old and very wise.

She is a part of the cold street
  As much as any cobble-stone,
And though we laugh to see her there,
  She would be missed if she were gone.

And so she plies her petty trade—
  Deep in her heart she bears such hate!
Selling but matches now, no more—
  This little fire, for that great;

For gentlemen that happen by,
  To light up with along the way—
Which, having burnt their beauty out,
  Even as herself, they cast away.

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XVII: THE ELECTRIC CITY

At night, along the city's dazzling ways,
  Flare dizzily, like fierce and flaming suns,
  A million lights, all scattering at once
A garish glare abroad and desolate blaze.

Her pulse of fiery life quivers and shakes;
  Earth's elemental forces, in disdain,
  Moan through her streets in sullen wrath of pain,
Nor twilight lulls her, nor the dawn awakes—

Lying forever with unslumbering breath,
  The latter world's Prometheus chained and bound
  For the new theft from heaven of fire new-found,
Knowledge of good and evil, life and death.

XVIII: THE TIDE

Their hands for a space
Touched—their lips quivered together, and clung:
Heart on heart,
Breast on breast, and spirit on spirit, they hung.

For the first time,
They felt the onward force of the reckless tide—
The sullen flood,
Sweeping hopes and fears and warnings aside.

Trembling they hung,
Shivering with ecstasies, visions, and vague alarms—
Suddenly, then,
He would have turned. She prisoned him in her arms.

XIX: DAWN: EAST SIDE

The long, long streets are desolate and blank,
  The river-wharves beyond loom bleak and gray;
  Down chilly vistas shining far away,
With blinded windows the "Seamen's Savings Bank"
  Catches the first faint ray

Shot from the cloudy dawn, windy, and breaking
  Along the east, along the abandoned goal.
  Far up the river the solemn whistles roll,
As if the souls of men, from dreams awaking,
  Cried out to the world's soul,

As if the hearts of men cried out to Man—
  Here, in this breathless moment, one at last,
  In the deep terror before the dawn has passed,
One soul, sad and alone, under the span
  Of the terrible, starless Vast.

And now, in the strange fear before the day,
  The unsuccessful harlot's tired feet
  Echo, strangely vehement, down the dumb street;
The sounds of drunken laughter, pathetically gay,
  Re-echo and retreat

Among the deserted rows of gaunt, gray houses,
  And all the world is stiller than the tomb;
  Only a shutter there, in that darkened room,
Opens—the pallid light of morning rouses
  The walls out of their gloom,

Showing a few soiled chairs and a faded picture.
  The corner saloon, in the last chill of night,
  Stands out garish and wind-blown, cold and bright;
The arc-lamp, swinging from the black iron fixture,
  Pales in the widening light.

And all the morning in my spirit, too,
Shines, like a fiery sunrise, or a cloud
Shot through with dawn; as from a shattered shroud,
My soul, with the white dawn shot through and through,
Rises, singing aloud.

Till the new love within me, surging and mad,
Yearns toward all human things that here draw breath,
The dawn, and the gray city underneath—
So sordid, so ridiculously sad,
But grave with love and death.

XX: SILENT ANSWER

After the glare and tumult of the day,
They sat within the taxi's shadowed gloom,
Whirling along the old familiar way,
As in a dream, toward some remembered doom—
And the mute city all about them lay
Deserted as a tomb.

And long-dumb sorrowings began to call
Within him, and a sense of loneliness,
Unquenched by crowds and merriment and all,
Against her cheek and bosom felt no less;
Between them the inexorable wall
Of human separateness.

Till, in the silences, their lips grew near:
He felt how, clinging to him like a bride,
Her breath came fast—oh, was it joy or fear
That shook her as he caught her to his side,
"I love you, love you, love you, do you hear!"
Her lips on his replied.

XXI: INTIMATION

Within the modern world deformed and vast,
  Lurks, everlasting—though all men deny—
The awful Force that in the ages past
  Walked on the waves and cried on Calvary.

I feel it in the crowded city street
  'Mid iron walls and wheels and clanging cars;
I feel it in my pulses as they beat,
  The monstrous Secret that propels the stars.

XXII: LAST DAYS TOGETHER

The day drew nearer when these two must part:
  Ere midnight, through the luminous city's vast
  And stony wilderness, side by side, they passed—
He with the gray ghost clinging at his heart.

Her bounteousness, her great, glad ways of love
  Careless and sensual, the exuberant wealth
  Of her whole being's sanity and health,
The mystery and the primal lure thereof,

Humbling his pride to the dear woman-ways,
  Bowing his dream to the more lovely truth,
  Through all the hungering caverns of his youth
Shot the fierce thirst and longing for her grace,

Her body's beauty—which, even as a flower
  That on the night-wind spreads her soft perfume,
  Across the chalice of her beauty's bloom
To be wasted lured love on with subtle power,

Fain as a moth that trembles toward its goal:
  Prisoned at last, and satiate with excess,
  Snared at the core of her deep loveliness,
Caught in the web of the sweet woman-soul.

Now with swift laughter, luring hands and sweet,
  She drew him along the way; now was she dumb,
  As premonitious of the dread day to come.
On through the glittering vistas of the street,

They passed, the laughing heart, and the heart beside
  'Twixt fierce regret and ecstasy all dismayed;
  The theatre, for some gala night arrayed,
Poured forth its human abundance, like a tide—

Of idle faces, fair women, music, and light,
  Of jewels and shimmering garments, color and sound,
  Of murmurous voices and laughter shed around,
And soft luxuriance—out into the night:

Gay faces, and faces of elder reverence—
  While, here and there, amid the lovely whirl,
  A will o' the wisp of some rare, delicate girl,
Virginal, shy with the first innocence,

Poised like a dove a moment, and was gone.
  The champing horses restively stirred, and beat
  The reverberant asphalt—from far down the street
Whistles and cries to lure some carriage on.

So, on the tidal luminousness afloat,
  The sumptuous city's everlasting stream
  Of magical splendor, they passed as in a dream;
Till the quick pang that struggled in his throat

Stirred—and the wound deep down, with many a throb.
Turning the corner into the huddled, waste
Desertion of the half-lighted street, with haste
He drew her against his bosom with a sob.

XXIII: CHANT

The amplitude of space comes down to your own door;
Equally with the stars, the common and the street
Are part of the great beauty that shines from shore to shore.
The universe divine lies round us at our feet—
Tangible, made of dust, and holy to the core.

Not in some world beyond dwells wonder, nor above,
Nor throned among the spheres, nor set for days to be;
Over you and beneath, whether you rest or move,
Reaches the stately fact, the starry eternity—
And all the hell of hate, and all the heaven of love.

Here between birth and death, here in this womb of races
Across the field of the world, from you to the farthest end,
Scattered abroad like flowers—the myriad, myriad faces,
The lives, fated to yours, of lover and of friend—
Have you no love to shout across the horizoned spaces?

Before your generation and you go hurrying by,
Have you no word for all, of pure and valorous breath?
Oh, how the common doom transfigures destiny!
In the brave thought of all who pass through life and death,
Splendid it is to live, and glorious to die.

XXIV: THE LAST MEETING

The shadowy and the tremendous multitude,
Wearing at heart the old, the human dream—
The lust, the sorrow, the grandeur—like a stream
Bore down upon him in tumultuous flood:

Bearing him bounteous gifts—forever cast
  Here, like wild waves, on the huge shores of fate—
  Of life, magnanimous and compassionate,
Triumphantly, and the belovèd face at last.

XXV: HYMN TO THE CITY

O Mother of many tears,
Mother of pain, whose mighty bosom bears,
Close at that heart of thine,
A million hearts, temporal and divine,
Passionate with unrest!
Mother with the sword of ages in the breast!
Mother whose heart is stone,
Whose veins are iron, whose eternal moan
Sounds through the nights and days!
O Mother unsung, unhonored, without praise,
Terrible, strange, and dumb,
Thy bounteous strength not for all days to come
Flags, nor for all the scorn—
Laboring vastly on; but night nor morn
With the tenderness of grace
Hallows the lines of thine unlovely face!

Instinctive, crude, and brave,
Fierce with compassion, powerless to save,
Thou bearest all along
In thy vast bosom; but, undivined and strong,
Within thee lives and works—
Within the darkness of thy womb there lurks
The germinating Love
Whose pity shall burst a million chains, and move
The sides of hell apart,
And bind all men together, heart by heart.

Hail, all hail!
I herald him, *I* sing. He shall not fail—
His trumpet is blown: from the casement
Of palace windows even to the basement
Of the barred jail shall shake
The thunder of his love, till men awake.

O Mother whose weary womb
Shall bear a new Christ to the world to come!
Mother austere, unknowing,
Throned by the headlands and the waters flowing,
And on thy populous graves—
Surrounded by the stars and with the girdling waves!

XXVI: A BENCH IN THE PARK

Here where the Park is still,
  Here where the city's roar
Fades, and we have our will,
  Love me, and love me more—
Leave me, and love me still.

Hold me and draw me near,
  Close to your hiding breast;
When, in your arms, I hear,
  Vaguely, your heart's unrest
Plunging through year and year,

All the glad pangs of breath
  Drawn by the breasts of men
Fill me, and underneath
  Stir the mute strings of pain,
Strive the strong chords of death.

XXVII: DEPARTURE

Into the city and the air of morning
He stepped, and felt the wind upon his face—
Up through his being welled a brimming joy
Not all the fever, nor the weariness,
Nor his awakening sorrow, could destroy.

The pallid clouds hung low on the horizon,
Cold in the first flame of the widening day—
Through shadowy alley and through brightening street
There came a breath of ocean and the tides,
The asphalt had warm odors, wet and sweet.

While shop on shop opened a garish window—
Gay hats and dresses, jewels, crockery—
The vendor wheeled his cart along the square.
Faces of men and women hurried past him,
Each with its secret and its separate care;

And the great city, wistful in the sunlight,
Shone with a pathos terrible and tender,
A tired joy too patient to be glad.
He felt a thought touch the old human pageant
To a new beauty, lovable and sad.

The loneliness, the isolation, vanished;
He felt his life at one with all these others,
Purged of its separate pain, healed of its scars—
One with the common joy and general sorrow
Of all the hearts that beat beneath the stars:

The world of men, so sordid, and so wilful,
With beauties brimmed and many a lust obscene,
Carnal and careless, brave without a moan—
And saved forever gloriously, not
Through fear of evil, but through love alone.

EPILOGUE

Some years it is, dear angel of my youth,
Since first I lost you, many years ago—
Dear angel, liberator of my youth
From the dim caves of dream in which I lay.

For from myself my very self you freed
To all I longed for, all I loved the most:
Hardy and gay—healing all sickliness,
Healing all dreams with the more lovely fact—
You came to me, and I knew you for my truth
That was to drench me in the bitter brine
And quickening wave of life. Even as swift,
You passed, like a flash of lightning in the spring.

Yet oft, even now, along the city's ways,
By empty square or hubbub of huddled street—
Through all the sordid and sacred haunts of men—
There comes a moment. When, in the garish night,
Laughing and loitering, the crowd goes by;
When, in the noontide clamor and unrest,
The tireless flood of being, like a sea,
Superb with pitiless strength, rolls on; or yet,
Along the deserted pavements, when at dusk
Only the huckster's cry is heard afar,
I feel your presence, breathless and passionate there,
Not without pathos, move as in days of old—
A flash of the sane humanity, strong and well,
Reaching around me—vigorous, tawdry, brave,
Full of unsubtle ardor, but oh, how dear!

Ah, then I listen, and hear, as in a dream,
Amid the chords of the travail and pain and joy
Of all things human, a young, an undaunted voice—
With wanton exuberance and immortal lust
The music of life, welling up strong and clear.

SUNDAY EVENING IN THE COMMON

Look, on the topmost branches of the world
  The blossoms of the myriad stars are thick;
  Over the huddled rows of stone and brick
A few sad wisps of empty smoke are curled,
  Like ghosts languid and sick.

One breathless moment now the city's moaning
  Fades, and the endless streets seem vague and dim.
  There is no sound around the whole world's rim,
Save in the distance a small band is droning
  Some desolate old hymn.

Van Wyck, how often have we been together
  When this same moment made all mysteries clear:
  The infinite stars that brood above us here,
And the gray city in the soft June weather,
  So tawdry, and so dear.

THE CLOSE OF MASS

The holy candles fade and flare,
  Where the slow priest with swaying tread
Moves, and the organ shudders there,
  And the dumb people bow the head:
  The body of Christ is dead.

Through the long aisles and vaulted gloom
  Groans the mute common heart of men,
Sullen and holy with its doom;
  On pilaster and wall, again
  A Christ is crowned of men.

The circlet and its thorny rim
  His carven forehead clasp and span,
But they have cramped and humbled him
  Into a god, who was a man—
  The first since time began.

O common world, O world of men,
  Have you no answer, are you dumb,
Who bore us a Christ, and shall again
  Bear us a Christ when the time is come—
  Where is your voice, are you dumb?

They crucified him, in their pride,
  And mocked him, standing underneath:
Shall they tear the son from the mother's side—
  Shall they call him God, with profane breath—
  Shall they rob a man of death?

They have crowned him with a fire of light,
  With all the heavens for his seat,
They have made him awful with might of might:
  Where are the man's eyes, still and sweet—
  Where are the tired feet?

The silence aches; but through the reeds
  Of the organ, through choir and arches dim,
The echoing world grows loud, and pleads,
  With rough, hard hands and thorny diadem—
  "Where is my Christ, what have you done to him?"

FUGITIVE JOY

In the harsh world of struggle and of pain,
And many a sore defeat—the lands of death
And fierce survival—see, in the little room
Sits the one kind, the one consoling thing,
Where your belovèd, with brave beauty dear,
Frail body swaying, and laughing lips of love,
Lures your sad heart to the most fugitive joy.

RIVER WHISTLES

At night, in the city, when the far-off whistles blow,
I think of you far off in the dark and the night,
And the old days come back, of our young delight
So long ago.

I remember the evening we parted forever at last:
The long, dim aisle of trees in the lamp-lit Park,
The sombre houses, huddled chilly and dark
On a sky overcast—

And even the sound of a newsboy's voice in the street,
And a rumbling car, in that moment of exquisite pain,
Burned themselves like odors into my brain,
Sharp and yet sweet.

Because we knew it must be forever and aye,
We would laugh, we said, to make it a little thing;
I remember your voice, how your laugh had a curious ring
Not wholly gay—

The old dear way of moving your shoulders had,
And when you had walked away for a little while,
How you turned back with a last, brave ghost of a smile,
But not glad, not glad.

At night, in the city, when the far-off whistles blow,
I think of you far off in the dark and the night.
The arc-lamp out in the street flares dizzy and white,
And the dawn comes slow.

MORNING TO COME

Star beyond star and mile on mile withdrawn,
Seen from the country and the outer night,
Along the horizon the far city's light
Shines like a moonrise or a luminous dawn.

What silence broods upon the country ways:
Meadow and wood and hill in starry peace
Dream, in the silence of the great release—
The valleys slumber in the lingering haze.

O dawn of the world to be, morning to come,
New light of the human love in every breast,
Rise—flood with trumpets all the east and west!
My heart rings herald, though my lips be dumb.

O future Christ! my feet run on before.
Mankind, or god, or scarred iconoclast—
Rise, wake the sleepers with one clarion blast
Whose thunders shall re-echo evermore!

THE BELOVÈD ADVENTURE

(1912)

The old familiar beauty
Caressed by the world's dead hands—
Beauty, so old and weary,
Beloved of a thousand lovers,
Surprising, ineffable, changeless
Comes to us evermore.

LOVE AND DEATH

How great a prophet and a teacher is Love,
That at one heart reveals all mystery;
I always hated death and the dark thought,
Before love came to me—

And all the body, temporal and faulty,
And all sad, common things that feed the tomb—
But, in your arms, I understand and pity
Their sorrowful, high doom.

Against your lips, deep from your eyes now burning
Grave against mine, I draw, with quickening breath,
The holy pain of life, and all the splendid
Proud tragedy of death.

SEA-MIST

The mist is on the sea, and over the long dunes
The long mist stretches blindly to the sea—
Here on this bleak shore beyond the gray lagoons
What a childhood song creeps on the waves to me,
With a low sound, with a soft low sound of the sea.

Oh, when the heart sings with dumb, hovering tunes,
How may we endure the songs beyond the sea—
All the flying light and splendor of glad Junes
Hurrying, with the years, where no glad years be,
With a low sound, with a soft low sound of the sea!

I will rise and sing after the dead moons—
I will rise and sing, knowing we are more free,
More strong, than time or fate. But here by the lagoons,
Oh, do not sing at all—but lean, oh lean to me,
With a low sound, with a soft low sound of the sea.

MOONLIGHT

Ah, though I were a ghost,
To-night I should fare forth under the host
Of the high, lonely stars,
To seek you: though beyond the utmost bars
Of the world's bourne you were,
Though hid beyond the Morning's flaming hair
And the bowed Twilight's head—
On such a night, though I were doomed and dead,
I should arise, alas,
And look for you; between the dewy grass
And the pale, marble moon
Wandering, for sake of a remembered June.

The inviolate fields of space
Should know my spirit hungering for your face—
Plains where the leafage yields
Scant shadow; through the glimmering moonlit fields
And meadows half-asleep,
I should go gliding, and on the soundless Deep,
My spirit drenched with dew,
With the immense, clear winds blown through and through,
Star beyond burning star,
And mile on moonlit mile of waves afar,
Drift like a cloud, until I came to you.

Ah, and when I should be
At one low window where, in reverie,
You leaned for a short space,
Feeling the night-wind cool upon your face,
And the cold moonlight clear—
So human, and so selfish, and so dear,
So careless, and so strong—
After all the long years, and hours long,
Of bodiless dead things,
Would not my soul yearn upward to the springs

Of your sweet flesh, and all
The love within me cling to you, and call,
Laying, for the old sake,
Against your lips poor ghostly lips that ache—
And, on your forehead, lay
A somber kiss, from one far, far away.

VISTAS

Beyond the dark, wide sea lie the enchanted isles,
  Beyond the long horizon music calls to me:
I see it in the sadness and smiling of your eyes,
  I hear it in the far-off rustling of the sea.

O sweet lands lost at birth, that we shall never find!
  O glad life passing by, and things that cannot be!
I see it in the sadness and smiling of your eyes,
  I hear it in the far-off rustling of the sea.

ALONG THE DUNES

The moonlight makes the dunes seem pale and gray,
  And the long sea-mist veils their lonely faces—
  Along the horizon, in the clear, cold spaces
Seaward, a few stars tremble in the spray
  Of the flung sea's embraces.

And on the dunes still shimmers like a wine
  The daylight, where the rose of day grows tired:
  With starlight, and to night, doomed and inspired,
The white sea labors, line upon plunging line,
  Toward the blind goal desired—

And all the air is vague with infinite sound.
One house upon the dunes stands dumbly yearning,
With dull, dark windows, toward the unreturning.
The fierce, eternal waters all around
Leap in the moonlight, burning.

WOMAN

Now you have come to me: the sea is dark and still,
The dunes shut out the wind, here where we sit alone—
Here we may watch the stars together, and take our fill
Of silence and of night and the sea's ancient moan.

Oh, with a fierce child love, as for a mother, I cry
For the sacred source of things, whence I, too, have my breath—
To draw you down to my heart and feel your pitying sigh,
While myriad unborn souls call from the wastes of death.

SUMMER'S END

The last late swallow is fled,
And all the hope of the heart—
The summer is over and dead.

Forever and ever to part!
The summer is over and dead,
But what of the hopeless heart?

Come, for the swallow is fled—
Come away, silent heart,
Silent with dreams that are dead.

Come, for you cannot stay
Nursing your restless heart
All in the dusk of the day.

Come, for when all has been said
What is there more to say!
The summer is over and dead.

The last late swallow is fled,
Silent, into the south—
But oh, the curve of her throat!
The sound of her voice—
The kisses of her mouth!

The summer is over and dead.

AT DUSK

Look, before us reaches the wide, flat sea
  Over his sands! Now in this moment I know
  Something quiet and singing, lost long ago,
Come back to me.

Ah, for a moment now do not laugh or be glad:
  The bitter years will take us and leave us gray,
  We shall forget all the proud words we say—
Grow old and sad.

Oh, hold me, hold me—do not let me forget!
  Throw your arms about me closely, lean your head—
  Say the old words again, and when you have said,
Whisper them yet.

SERENADE

The stars are out, and the heavens are silent and very deep,
  My heart was wakeful and wild, and hungry to be with the stars,
I rose and came to thy window—but thou, my belovèd, sleep!

Sleep, though my heart be wild and wakeful and full of unrest:
The crickets are still, and the breezes creep in at thy window, sweet—
Thy right arm is under thy head, and thy left lies over thy breast.

Sleep till the wind be dead and the stars swoon out of the skies,
The world is full of laughter and weeping and passionate prayer;
More soft than the night on the waters are thine eyelids over thine eyes.

I lay in my chamber dreaming, but my heart would leave me no rest;
I thought, When the morrow dawns I shall not see her again—
And my heart grew loud in my veins, my heart grew strong in my breast.

I said, I will rise and go and sing to her in the night;
She will wake from her sleep and come, and come to me where I sing,
And come to my arms where I stand, alone, in the pale starlight.

But sleep—it is better, belovèd, than vexing thee with my cries,
The world is full of laughter and weeping and passionate prayer;
More soft than the night on the waters are thine eyelids over thine eyes.

Old dreams, old loves, old desires, and all the old wonderings
Of the piteous bygone loves, wail round at thy window, sweet;
But thou art weary, belovèd—yea, weary of all these things,

Weary of all these things, and fain of slumber and rest,
Fain of slumber and darkness, the far-off sound of the sea:
Thy right arm is under thy head, and thy left lies over thy breast.

Sleep till the wind be dead and the stars swoon out of the skies,
The world is full of laughter and weeping and passionate prayer;
More soft than the night on the waters are thine eyelids over thine eyes.

A CRY

She is gone forever and ever,
And the loathèd, unloving faces
Press round me, and leave me never.

I am set in the lonely places—
O passionate heart, forever
The loathèd, unloving faces!

I wish they would leave me alone
To think of her in my heart,
Unseen, unnoticed, unknown.

O loathèd, unloving faces,
Leave me to sit apart—
Apart in the lonely places!

I said: "I will build in my heart
A paradise out of the world,
And live in my world apart."

I said: "I shall see her never
In the body. Well, even so—
I will live in the spirit forever."

God said to me, "This cannot be,
You are little more than the brute:
Shall body and spirit agree!"

I wish that my love would come
And lay her lips to my lips,
And kiss me till I were dumb.

I wish she would bend her head
And red lips over my throat,
And rise up, and leave me dead.

SEPTEMBER NIGHT

The starlight crept in at my window through the apple-tree branches above,
The wind moaned over the meadows, and swayed my curtains around,
And my heart grew hungry again for the face of the old, lost love,
I could not sleep for the pain of starlight and wandering sound.

The cry of the crickets grew faint, and waned on the shimmering air,
I saw the long, dim meadows sloping down to the sea—
I could not sleep for the silence and the utter, blind despair,
I could not rest for desire of the old love to comfort me.

I rose, and held out my arms, alone, in the pale, cold light,
I prayed for the old, lost love—but beyond my window-bars
I saw his proud, white form, as of one in the restless night
Moving far-off, disconsolate, under the lonely stars.

A LAST LETTER

Forgive me, dear, this last and vain delay,
This desperate utterance and untimely boast
Of my true love of you—the thought that most
Now in this urgent hour I long to say,
Before, in the full dawning of the day,
Love's twilight wane, and with the glamorous host
Of stars and dreams retiring, like a ghost
Down the long aisles of time I fade away.

Treasure my love and keep it ever new,
I charge you, dear, as an anointing kiss
Upon your forehead through the days to be;
Nor grudge me this last, dreadful cry to you,
Wrung from a soul departing: after this
Is the long silence of eternity.

AN EMPTY HOUSE

This is your room, this is where you slept
In the old years—here where the waves broke
On the gray shore, and the little waves crept,
Whispering of the middle sea as they spoke—
This is where you woke.

You are gone, you are gone—and the waves fall
In the old familiar way, the cricket's shrill
Drops, and the sea makes no sound at all:
Save for the cicadas on the hill,
It is still, it is still.

Never, though the new years bring new joys to keep,
Shall I turn to one as in the old delight—
Never, in all the years to come, shall you sleep
Here by the sea, by the starlight,
In the night, in the night.

SONG

I shall not love you again
As in the days before,
April and April's pain
Return, ah nevermore.

Your voice when you used to call,
The little ways you had—
I have forgotten them all,
And yet I am not sad.

No little thought of you,
Between my breath and breath,
Rises, as memories do,
To veil the face of death.

I prayed not to forget,
  Once, in a vain despair;
I cannot even regret
  Now, that I cannot care.

Here in the waning light
  I am not even sad—
My heart sings through the night,
  Half sorrowful, half glad,

"I shall not love you again
  As in the days before,
April and April's pain
  Return, ah nevermore."

O SORROWFUL FACE

O sorrowful face over which the years are a veil,
  The vanished years are a deep veil over your face—
  And Love, whose eyes were bright for a little space,
The vanished years are over his eyes like a veil.

O sorrowful face, O meek and sorrowful face,
  I cannot love you as once I have loved you—but see,
  Bending back, with the sad lips of memory
I kiss a little sadness away from your face!

FIRST LOVE

These shores, these rolling wastes and solitudes of sand,
  These dunes with their scant grass that the sea-wind blows through,
Gaunt timbers and gray bones that strew this sterile land,
  How they recall the dream and memory of you—
The silence of your eyes, the trembling of your hand.

Northward and to the south the low clouds line the sea,
  The bleak and barren ways are round me with a pang
And sudden sense of you, a flash of memory—
  Here is the fisherman's hut, half-tumbled, where you sang
That dear, ridiculous song, and turned and laughed at me.

The arbor, too, is fallen, where once we sat and heard
  The chill September wind blow through the starlit roof:
I see your gesture yet, when, at some foolish word,
  Impious from my lips, you turned in stern reproof—
So seriously grave, so dear, and so absurd.

Ah, those evenings vanished, those nights of long ago—
  Alas, where are they fled! The sea-wind moans, "alas".
The sad, immortal sea heaves tremulously below,
  And the dunes answer not. The sea-birds wheel and pass.
The somber and gray twilight comes solemnly and slow.

Do you remember still that night beside the shore
  I vowed you all my love? Half playfully, and yet
Incredulous and sad, you wagered me, before
  A year had come and gone I wholly should forget
All the words I whispered, and all the vows I swore.

And suddenly the sea was dark and ominous,
  And you within my arms seemed dwindled to a ghost;
The sorrowful sea-wind grew lonely over us—
  Filled with a new, vague fear, I made my desperate boast,
Never should this thing be, ah, never, never thus.

Beneath the curving dune, we watched the far-off ships
  With winking lights go by, and you were grave and still;
Leaning against my heart, in feignèd sleep's eclipse
  Your eyelids sank, your lips were sad and mute until
They curved into a laugh beneath my laughing lips

Vanished, vanished, vanished, all crumbled with the years,
All the promise broken and all the dream undone;
Even my love of you, sealed with so many tears,
My golden, foolish youth, alas where are they gone!
No voice within replies, no vision re-appears.

Only the infinite deep, on which the sea-bird's wing
Sinks wearied, the dark waste of wave on endless wave,
Fresh with the boundless breath as cool and soft as spring,
The solemn fields of sea, holy and green and grave,
Keep their eternal sleep, nor change in anything.

Under the heaven of evening, cloud beyond cloud afar,
With murmurs thronged and winds, and flecked with streaks of white,
The stately waters move where sky and cloud-line are.
The odor of the huge sea is heavy in the night,
Within her spray hangs drenched the jewelled evening-star.

Still the hand of twilight with darkness strokes and stills
The somber and immense breast of the swelling sea,
And the pale hand of dawn across the darkness spills
Her clear and crystal cup of radiant ecstasy—
The white, immaculate waste of morning sobs and thrills.

The crash of hurtling foam, along her confines hurled,
Echoes—her voice is loud beyond the morning-stream.
The sad robe of the sea, about the planet curled,
Rustles and shines with night and light; gleam answers gleam,
And thunder answers thunder, along the throne of the world.

Autumn is in the air: the stormy beach is strewed
With wave-washed drift and wreckage, and you are far away.
All things are changed and vanish, like a changing mood,
All things are changed and pass and perish in a day,
Except the enormous Waste and boundless Solitude.

PHANTOM

Along the edge of the great, moving sea,
That moaned forever on her barren bars,
The old, sad love came back again to me,
Moving quietly under the quiet stars.

O sad love, do not smile upon me so,
Nodding so gently with your little head—
All the old wonder of your eyes is dead,
And the sea-winds have chilled you long ago.

THE SOUND OF THE SEA

Always, here where I sleep, I hear the sound of the sea,
Rolling along the dunes, along the desolate places,
Full of a vague rumor of dreams and remembered faces—
Always, here where I sleep, I hear the sound of the sea.

So have I heard it sound, for thirty summers or more,
Sighing up through the meadows, between the unanswering houses,
Up through the dewy fields where the dark herd sleepily browses—
So have I heard it sound, for thirty summers or more.

Under quivering stars, or stars that were clouded and scattered,
All through my moments of joy and pain, of sleeping and dreaming,
Ever that quiet murmur sorrowfully was streaming—
Under quivering stars, or stars that were clouded and scattered.

Out of that somber voice swept on the wings of time,
Shall I not, bending down from the starry trellis of heaven,
Look on this empty room, these meadows shining and even—
Out of that somber voice swept on the wings of time!

Beyond what glittering stars and in what ultimate regions,
  Drifted along with the night, shall I look back and ponder
  On the forgotten sound, the earth, and the ancient wonder—
Beyond what glittering stars and in what ultimate regions!

THE LOST LAND

Tumult is in the west, and wild voices calling—
  The old barbaric voices calling, that will not rest;
  Therefore my heart is glad, I am strong, I shout with the west,
And follow, with tears and laughter, where the leaves are falling.

The lean cattle roam where the wind bows down the grass,
  The swallows leap on the wind, and shift, and follow, and stray
  Over the long dunes, to the land of the heart, far away,
Calling—and in my veins a voice cries out where they pass.

I remember the house, the sorrow long ago,
  In the first, widening dawn of the world, the quiet face
  Lost ere the first sea sang, or the wind—the lonely place,
Beyond the white-capped sea, where the winds and waters go.

I will laugh on the hills, shout as the days depart:
  Death cannot quench this spirit, or stay me with his hand;
  I shall spring from the dust again toward the long-lost land,
As the lithe swallow springs when autumn cries in the heart.

Beyond the long, gray clouds the winds walk in the west;
  The lean cattle pause, with strained-out throats, and stray,
  Where the swallows leap on the wind, and shift, and follow
    away,
Calling, calling. Oh, the voices will leave no rest.

I will laugh on the hills, gird myself up for my race:
Yea, thou art very fair, thou art strong, but O earth, O my mother,
The cry, deep in the heart, not all the years can smother—
The old, strange pang, the voices, the lost place!

ANY ORLANDO TO ANY ROSALIND

Ah, Rosalind, the boy-like clothes,
How futile are they, and how fair!
The locks are short, but what red rose
Lurks beneath the hidden hair?
O maid-like, maid-like fair!

What unknown thing is there to fear
In this boy face, these boy-like eyes!
Come close to me, look up, draw near—
And is it pity in them lies?
O woman's, woman's eyes!

MOON-DAWN

Along the somber east the flower of night, full-blown,
A sad and sacred perfume breathes, and the heavy Vast
The huge odor of the sea fills with a sense unknown,
Of mystery and sleep. Dim twilight hangs aghast—
Save for one trembling star, unlit from zone to zone.

Bitter and sharp and sweet, stern as all things that are,
The odor of life is here—wet sand and rank seaweed.
The waters, clear and cold, make music from afar—
Along the low, flat sky recede, recede, recede
The unwinged wastes of wave beyond the evening-star.

But lo, from out the darkness—now, from the clouds unfurled,
A sudden sword of moonlight strikes on sea and land:
Odor and sound and light mingle, a breath is whirled
Ecstatic through all things, that feel the vibrant hand,
Holy, harmonious God, upon the strings of the world.

CORPUS EST DE DEO

Lo, say the wise, say the very wise—
"Only the soul is of God," say they,
"She shall not perish or pass away,
But the flesh dies, but the fair flesh dies."
Corpus est de Deo.

This is the time, this is the brave time,
How that Lord Christ was risen from death,
All we shall sing, all we that have breath,
In a glad rhyme, in a joyous rhyme.
Corpus est de Deo.

One Joseph said, and good Joseph said,
"That I might bear the body away
And the white body in sepulchre lay,
And the heavy head, the heavy head!"
Corpus est de Deo.

With myrrh and spice, with fresh myrrh and spice
And linen white, the white body they bound—
This saw, from a more removèd ground,
Mary's eyes and the Magdalen's eyes.
Corpus est de Deo.

With spices sweet, with fresh spices sweet,
In tomb they laid the body away;
"Oh, piteous Lord, Master," cried they—
And, "The wounded feet, oh, the wounded feet!"
Corpus est de Deo.

With their own hands, with their own sad hands,
  They closed the door with a massy stone,
  There none remained but the watch alone—
On His wrists, bands; on His feet, grave-bands.
    Corpus est de Deo.

Silence around, deep silence around:
  There was none wept with a covered face,
  There was none mourning about the place,
With a low sound, with a sad, low sound.
    Corpus est de Deo.

Master, arise! Good Master, arise!
  Nay, for a little a sleep is sweet—
  Desire there was not in His feet,
And in His eyes no light for His eyes.
    Corpus est de Deo.

With sound of might, with sound of great might,
  The white grave-cloths were rent in sunder,
  With a terribleness and wonder,
And a great light and fire of light.
    Corpus est de Deo.

Be very glad, be exceeding glad—
  Exult, cry out, for your great gladness!
  His spirit sprang from the night and sadness,
And was not sad—no, and was not sad.
    Corpus est de Deo.

Put by your shame, put by your vain shame,
  Loose your lips and your heart in song!
  Out of the darkness that is most strong
His body came, His fair body came.
    Corpus est de Deo.

Lo, say the wise, say the very wise,
"Soul is of God, the body a vain thing."
Dance with your feet, let your mouth sing!
Lift up your eyes, lift up your sad eyes!
Corpus est de Deo.

In every place say they, in each place,
"Soul is of God; the body of shame."
Out of the dust His sweet body came,
And blood to His face, to His sweet face.
Corpus est de Deo.

Oh, wondrous thing—oh, most blessèd thing:
Body and soul of one great birth!
All ye that are of dust and earth,
Lift up and sing, lift ye up and sing,
"Corpus est de Deo."

MUSIC

When from beyond the far horizons of the world
The first, faint, dawning voices of the soul proceed,
I endure the pain of things primal and unknown,
And gird up my spirit, and follow where they lead.

I endure the pain of things importunate and vague,
Beckoning and dim, that make the poor heart bleed.
O voices beyond birth! O lost when I was born!
I gird up my spirit, and follow where you lead.

THE MOTHER

There was a trampling of horses from Calvary,
Where the armed Romans rode from the mountainside;
Yet, riding, they dreamed of the soul that could rise free
Out of the bruised breast and the arms nailed wide.

There was a trampling of horses from Calvary,
And the long spears glittered into the night;
Yet, riding, they dreamed of the will that dared to be,
When the head bowed and the heavens were rent with light.

The eyes that closed over sleep like folded wings,
And the proud mouth that kissed death with the cry
"Father, forgive them"—silently these things
They remembered, riding down from Calvary.

And Joseph, when the sick body was lowered slowly,
Folded it in a white cloth without seam—
The indomitable brow, inflexible and holy,
And the sad breast that held the immortal dream,

And the feet that could not walk, and the piercèd hand,
And the arms that held the whole world in their embrace;
But Mary, beside the cross-tree, could not understand,
Looking upon the tired human face.

ADIEU

Sad love, adieu—
So far away you are,
Not evening, nor the wings of the morning furled
About the breast of the world,
Shadow, or lighten, at the same time us two:
Farther than the farthest star
Hung on the bosom of morning, still more far
Than the sea's sound you dwell.
If in ten thousand years we should meet again,
By those eyes I should know you then.
Dear love, farewell.

SEPTEMBER BY THE SEA

The melancholy mood of bleak September
Fills the forsaken beach, here by the sea—
The gray pavilion stares out wearily,
The old wrenched seats and railings half remember
Their summer gayety.

So desolate, so windy, so forsaken—
A certain homesickness blows on the air;
The flagless pole seems sorrowful and bare.
The wind pierces my breast enough to awaken
The memories sleeping there.

Beneath his touch the cold sea shines and shivers;
The fallen arbor under which I sit
Sheds all its wrinkled leafage, bit by bit—
Through every leaf his breath rustles and quivers,
Shaking and stirring it,

And dips upon the ruffled waters, foaming.
In the wide pallor of the waning day
The sand lies bare—they are all gone away
But one old woman in a blue shawl, roaming
The beach windy and gray.

MOON-MIST

Last evening, when the dew-drenched veil
Of mist and moonlight, pearly pale,
All silver-soft and silent lay
Across the country far away,
Again I seemed to see you come,
As one that turns at twilight home,
Over the glimmering moonlit fields
And meadows that the lowland yields.

In the far hollows soft asleep,
The mists like flocks of trooping sheep
Cloudily drifted here and there,
And a low murmur on the air,
Of crickets' and cicadas' sound,
Cradled the meadows miles around—
A dim susurrus, half-aloud.
Nearer you drifted, like a cloud.

Some benediction of the blessed,
Some hovering pity, seemed to rest
On the mild country sorrow-stilled.
Throughout the night your presence thrilled—
That haunting aura drawing near;
My spirit trembled, as in fear
Or joy, through all that lovely dread
Sensing, along the twilight shed,
Your onward being, dark and sweet—
The lingering slowness of your feet.

Doubtful I leaned in drowsy mood—
When, suddenly, before me stood
Your breathing beauty, drenched with dew
Of dusk, and fragrant through and through
With breath of the wild country ways:
Veiled round in mist and shimmering haze
Of gauzy twilight dewy-clear,
That tangible loveliness so near,
That vehement weight and sweet excess
Of your own very loveliness,
Almost I thought to reach and touch—
Nor dared, for longing overmuch.

The vague light of the moon, that shone
Cloud-covered, quenched—and you were gone.

AN OLD SONG

My sister, my spouse, is as a secret spring,
A fountain of light under the brows of the morn,
A garden of quiet rest;
Under her side the melancholy sorrowing
Of ancient sadness is, and under her breast
The joy of the unborn.

My flower, my love, is as a shining star,
As a young rose hid in the windy grass,
A song in the land of death—
The mournful beauty of all brief things that are,
A passionate and unavailing breath,
A soft "alas."

My sister, my dove, is as a bundle of myrrh,
A house of delights, a garden of pleasant length,
A shady and pleasant tree;
Her breast is the mansion of certain dreams that were,
And her pale breast a promise of things to be,
A sorrowful strength.

As a cool wood is my own, my sister, my dove,
A giver of life, a gate to the land of breath,
A stooping and shady cloud—
As a sad secret bared for the eyes of love,
A futile defiance, sorrowful and proud,
Of ancient death.

EVENING PRAYER

Now through the dusk the straining eye discerns,
Beyond the clear horizon's cloudless brim,
A single taper, flaming white and slim,
Where the pure star of holy evening burns;

Big Jupiter across the silence yearns,
While slowly, through the darkness deep and dim,
Sirius climbs along the eastern rim,
And the great, glittering wheel of heaven turns.

I pray that I, like these, may still be found
Upon love's orbit, be it day or night—
Unchanging still through all the nights and days:
'Mid lives that falter, and blind worlds around,
Irrevocable, unweariable, and bright,
Wheeling along the everlasting ways.

SO YOU AND I

High up in heaven a crystal music, ground
From frost of the clear, chiming wheels that roll,
Tunes star to star, as soul to answering soul,
From high Arcturus to the deep profound;
Orion, in the ocean of sweet sound,
Moves duly, every star with bright control,
On turning axle, turns about the Pole—
And the immortal framework swings around.

So you and I, even as the planets draw
And bind each other, balance love with love
In the great universe of night and day—
Fixed and immutable, with love for law,
In endless orbit round each other move,
Unwearied and invariable as they.

THE BODY

Your body was made for many things, O Love:
For the feasting of eyes, and the touch of caressing hands,
And the hunger of eager lips bending above,
And the delight of lovers in starlit lands,

And the mouths of many children, that shall cry aloud
Ere they press—and the small, soft worm's untiring mouth,
When you are weary, when you are laid in your shroud,
And have turned your back on love, and the sun, and the south.

THE DESCENT OF QUEEN ISTAR INTO HADES

(Istar, sick of an unrequited love, and mad with jealousy, seeks surcease in the abode of Allat, the realm of the god Irkhalla, the Land of Death.)

Toward the mute, toward the inexorable land,
Istar, daughter of Sin, inclined her head,
Also, her steps toward the silence directed she;
Toward the mute, toward the arid land,
Toward the region where there is no sea,
Toward the country where the stars are dead,
She stretched forth her hand.

Ere it was finished and done—
The word of Queen Istar, and even her fierce word:
"The houses of darkness stand open, I haste, I fly;
In triumph to the dust I am gone,
Yea, even with laughter, with a cry—
I spread my hands as a bird,
I hasten, I run,

"Toward the darkness, toward the dread death,
Toward the place whose silence is laid as a covering thick,
Toward the land where the sun and the moon shed no beam,
Where sleep has no murmuring breath;
For lo, I am sick of a dream,
I loathe it—oh, I am sick!
I hunger for death.

"I burn, I am maddened, I go,
Neither any more do I cry, my wailing is dumb:
Let the winds of the dawn sing together that I may dance!
That I may enter and go
Let the gates of the darkness advance,
Let the gates make open, I come—
I order it so.

"Make open your bolts! Unbar!
Mine eyes are turned toward the place where there is no sky,
My feet are set toward the land where the sun is dead,
A land without moon or star—
Make open, for I have said;
Open—for lo, it is I,"
Saith the Queen Istar.

At the first gate, when she was come,
The keeper struck off her crown, the sign of her head,
Also, her high tiara he struck with his hand:
"Enter, O lady, and come,
Of Allat it is the command—
To the place where the stars are dead
Enter and come."

At the second gate, at that gate
To the vaults of darkness, the palace of rain and rust,
The rings from her ears, her ear-rings, he made them free:
"Enter, O lady, the gate,
Of Allat it is the decree—
The gate that is covered with dust,
Lo, this is the gate."

At the third gate, and at the third,
The necklace binding her neck, the circlet about,
It broke at his hand, also it fell at his touch:

"Obey, O lady, the word,
The order of Allat is such
In the city that hears no shout,
Where no laughter is heard."

To the fourth gate when she had pressed,
The cincture of her breast, the breast-band over her breast,
The ornaments thereof, the jewels, at his touch they fell:
"Make bare, O lady, thy breast,
Of Allat it is the will
In the land where the winds have rest,
Where the waves have rest."

At the fifth gate, at the gate of rust,
The girdle of her waist, the gems of it, row on row,
In his hands he took them, he laid them across his knees:
"Enter the palace of dust,
The word of Allat decrees;
Go, for thou willest, go—
Nay, for thou must."

To the sixth gate when she was led,
Her armlets, her anklets, he struck from her body sweet:
"To the land whose chiefs are as birds, whose kings are as birds,
Enter, O lady," he said—
"They are written of Allat the words,
'Let the night be a snare for her feet,
A shroud for her head.'"

At the seventh gate, when she was there,
The keeper tore from her body the covering veil—
As a blast of trumpets, sudden as a cymbal's clash,
Her body, splendid and bare,
Dawned on the dark in a flash;
Her body, stately and pale,
Dawned suddenly there.

"Enter, O lady, at length,
The land of ruin, the country of trampled wheat"—
With a shifting sound of her sandals she beat the ground;
She burst the portal at length,
She moved with a dancing sound,
With a shifting sound of her feet
And a sound of strength.

Istar lifted her hands,
She bit them, she beat her breast, she cried with a cry:
"O desolate lands whereof Istar hath entered the gate,
O dark and desolate lands!
Her body is choked with her hate,
With her hands she smites you—and I
With the hate of my hands.

"O desolate, dark and dark!
For the sake of love, and a vain love, for his sake
Do I seek you, the hunger of love makes hurried my breath;
My body, starving and stark,
Yearns toward the fullness of death—
For his sake also, I make
My robes of the dark.

"Behold you—and lo—and lo,
Have I mourned at all, have I made any wail as I went!
As a trodden serpent, a gusty shower of chaff,
I turn to re-plague you so:
I dance to the horror, I laugh,
My neck with laughter is bent—
I go, I go!"

Toward the mute, toward the inexorable place,
Istar, daughter of Sin, inclined her head—
She wearied of a bitter love, she passed, she was gone;

In the sad, in the empty place,
With the darkness that is blind to the sun,
In the country where the stars are dead,
She covered her face.

TO A BRIDE

When, in the moment of your greatest joy,
Your heart is drunken, and immense and free
Reaches before you the wide heaven of joy,
Remember me.

When your heart fails you, and you cannot bear
The thought of all the little days to be—
When, in the evening, you are very tired,
Remember me.

Oh, in the bridal chamber, in his arms,
When your breast heaves with music, like the sea—
When all the world is banished and forgot,
Remember me.

When on your death-bed you shall lie, and all
Your memory ebbs to the great Memory—
When on some other breast you lean at last,
Remember me.

THE FAREWELL

Alas, you were my youth, my youth—
My love ran on to greet you;
Sweet, at the fall of your luring feet,
My life ran on to meet you.

And when, with your head at my heart, you shed
Wild tears for your foolish lover,
Wild tears, as for one already dead,
And kissed me over and over—

O sweet, and hung at my heart, and clung,
  Grieving that you must grieve me—
I knew it was my youth, my youth,
  Was trying then to leave me.

I knew it was my youth, my youth—
  And oh, when you departed,
My youth and I had said good-bye,
  And I was broken-hearted.

O LOST

When the long winds are come, sorrowing, with September—
  Over the shining sea, that moves in a far-off place,
  Over the cold sea-dunes, out of the sunlit space,
Bowing the meadow-grass—I remember, I remember

All the vanished things, and all the old, strange days,
  The piteous child heart, the visions long ago,
  The murmur of deep waters where the cool winds blow—
I will follow them, calling, down the autumnal ways.

When the old years fade into the woods of September:
  The voice of the wind's moan crying the ancient woe,
  The voice of the wave's sob crying, "You may not go"—
The child heart crying, "I remember, I remember."

LANCELOT TO GUINEVERE

Now all the east is tired of the twilight,
  And the world's borders blossom like a rose,
    And the world's tapers tremble and grow dim;
Under the cloud-line, under the gray twilight,
    Under the pale, cold arch of heaven's rim,
  The low, white fire of the morning glows,

And a clear wind is wandering in the meadows—
O queenly heart, never again, again,
Shall this thing be, or this sweet wonder be!
I take my way through the unending meadows,
Through the long fields beside the sunless sea
I take my way, I pass from your domain.

The spirit's fire, whiter than the morning,
The inner flame, followed through day and day,
Burns to a purer light the old blind love;
Under the infinite arches of the morning
I move with a new gladness—high above,
The last stars fade, and I am far away.

I have found one thing more fair than the old heaven,
More sweet than all sad things to think upon—
Yes, and more sweet than your two folded hands.
Sleep, and forget: the opening gates of heaven
Flood, with a sudden pain, the empty lands,
And the old wonder wakes—but I am gone.

THE SPIRIT OF LIFE

Out of the secrets of your eyes
Looks up at me, most grave and wise
And weary from long leagues of strife,
The ancient mystery of life—
At the old call, to the old pain,
Forever re-arisen again:
Their steadfast patience still is set
Against some goal far distant yet.

When at your somber breast I lean,
Her tidal ebb and flow between,
Still hear I, as within the shell
The ocean's self is audible,

The sad and inarticulate roar
Of life, and ever toward the shore
Of lonely and forgetful death
Your blood pour on, with every breath.

Yet comes an hour: when, face to face,
Fear dies, death fades, and pulses race
Wanton and joyous to the doom—
When grave your eyes amid the gloom
Burn against mine, looks up anew,
Their dreamy lids and lashes through
And sudden tears of mine, to me,
The ageless lure and mystery,
The spirit of all life; and clings,
Tugs at my heart, and sways, and sings,
The sweet persuasion like the spring's—
The insatiate beauty, at your breast
Clamors and urges with unrest
And smiting shock of lovely pain,
"Be born again! Be born again!"

SONG AT TWILIGHT

Close to the highest, loneliest face of heaven
  The flaming candles of the stars are pressed;
Now are you tired because the day is done—
  And twilight heaves more softly in your breast
Grown weary of the sun.

The eyelids of the world droop full and drowsy,
  But the unwearied eyes shine far above her;
The tumult and the ancient struggles cease—
  The wars that beauty wages on her lover
Dwindle into a peace.

The helplessness of sleep fills me with pity—
  Even more than death, more lovable, more dear.
What care have you for all things past and done,
  Mournful or glad! In the hushed twilight here
They vanish, and are gone.

All passionate things, and all things great and joyous,
  Even they, too, must tire and fade away;
Even the heart grows tired and cannot weep,
  But, leaning on the ebbed and fallen day,
Sleeps—and is glad of sleep.

For, in the end, all things are grave and holy,
  And Love, whose thought was laughter and no other,
Above her lips with tears and kisses glad,
  Shine out the eyes of the undaunted mother,
Prophetical and sad.

CONFESSION

Ah, all my life, a shadow and a ghost,
  Amid the living millions I have moved;
  The human joy and pain I have not proved—
And even those whom I have loved the most,
  As from afar I loved.

In moments of close kinship felt no less,
  Even in the intimate moment felt to be,
  An isolating and old mystery
Falls—a deep veil of separate loneliness—
  Between all souls and me.

And now, below this summit where I stand,
  The sleeping city lies, austere and gray,
  Touched by the first glance of the widening day—
O world of men, could you but understand
  All that I yearn to say!

My love of you must be my only boast,
(Still powerless, still standing far aside)—
Alas, my life has been as one that cried
"I love you," and then vanished, like a ghost,
From the belovèd's side.

TO THE MORNING-STAR

There is a tear upon your lashes, star—
Is it for all humanity's old pain,
Her sorrows and her longings vast and vain?
O holy and seraphic morning-star,
Is it for all her longings vast and vain!

Open your lids, and close them once again,
In the immortal heavens where you are,
And let it fall upon us from afar,
A tear of pity from beyond all pain—
O holy and seraphic morning-star!

IRMA

I: SORROWFUL MEETING

Through the cold brilliance of the crowded street
At night-time passing, on my arm I felt
The touch of one, like memory, come from behind,
And a belovèd voice that greeted me
With the old name. Pausing, I turned about.

Strange was the face, and tragic were the eyes
That met me, the worn smile upon the lips,
The sorrowful, gay clothes, the sad, small form—
A ghost, a horror, it stood beside me there,
Sinister, harsh—hardly my heart had guessed,
Save for that same familiar joke of yours.

Light of my youth, alas and was it you!
Not glad the laughter that you gave me then.

II: THE LOST PARADISE

My own is like a desolated house
  Where love and faith lie dead,
A garden in the springtime of the year,
  With all its blossom shed;
Beauty and laughter in her face abide,
  Only the heart is dead.

Fair is her face, oh, flowerlike and fair—
  Of roses white and red;
Her lips are merry with all mockery;
  Only the heart is dead—
A garden, an abandoned paradise
  Whose angels all are fled.

III: AN OLD PICTURE

Look on this picture, Love, for this is she
  Whom now we serve, ere the first virgin grace
  Had left the earnest innocence of the face,
Or time had weighed the lips down wearily.

She stands before you in grave girlhood's guise,
  In fragile beauty fleeting as the spring's,
  Full of sweet pity and all tender things,
And fronts the future with undaunted eyes

Clear as the day's ere dusk has made them sad.
  Ah, spring and her flowers return as once before,
  But this one face returns not any more:
A happy phantom, with firm eyes and glad,

Wistful—a little eager, innocent ghost
That time has stolen and the years have slain
Forevermore. Look on this face again,
O Love, for this is she whom we have lost.

IV: LOVE KNOCKS AT THE DOOR

In the pain, in the loneliness of love,
To the heart of my sweet I fled,
I knocked at the door of her living heart—
"Let in, let in," I said.

"What seek you here?" the voice cried,
"You seeker among the dead."
"Herself I seek, herself I seek—
Let in! Let in!" I said.

They opened the door of her living heart,
But the core thereof was dead.
They opened the core of her living heart—
A worm at the core was fed.

"Where is my sweet? Where is my sweet?"
"She is gone away, she is fled;
Long years ago she fled away—
She will never return," they said.

V: THE MASK

The music danced and laughed aloud,
The music laughed and cried aloud—
You stepped into the whirling dance,
With gay and weary eyes.

You laughed and sang, you danced and sang,
The music laughed and danced and sang—
Your heart upon another's heart.
The music laughed and cried.

I see you still, I hear you still:
It was not you that danced at all—
I knew it all, I knew it all,
Alas, my sweet, alas.

VI: LOVE IN HELL

"Loves me," and "loves me not"—with careless hands
From the soft, wounded flower-face you tore
The petals, falling round you one by one.

Impatient, ere the last, sad, tell-tale leaf,
And guessing some denial ere you knew,
Into the flames you tossed it with a jest.

The shuddering flower writhed amid the flare:
Lo—her miscounted petals, one by one,
Whispering a "loves me" from the heart of hell.

VII: SWEET SHE IS

Sweet she is, and full of fleetness,
Like a flash of summer lightning
Beautiful and swift and blinding
In the starless night.

Like a little mournful wild-rose
With its soft, alluring petals,
Thorny stem, and wounding beauty—
Perilous, but sweet.

VIII: ENIGMA

I stood beside you where you lay at rest
With small, sweet, desperate mouth and folded hands—
Purer and much more virgin than the snow,
In the cold marble of immortal sleep.

April was in the air, but all around,
The laboring city's tumult, rage, and lust
Rolled like a sea; only within the room
It seemed a part of the dear spring lay dead—
Here at your breast, pale as a moonlit wave,
And the hushed heavings of its starry peace.

Cleansed of all stain in the clear fount of death,
Austere you lay, and unapproachable—
Breathless and chill, triumphant and serene,
And grave with a new dignity at last.

Only upon the silence of your lips,
Tenderly parted in an unfinished sigh—
Only upon your lips there seemed to be
A thirst, as if for some immortal thing:
Was it for love, that you had never known?

IX: TRANSFIGURATION

Ah, now your beautiful body,
  That bore so bitter a stain,
Has doffed the robes of her sorrow,
  Cast off the robes of her pain—
Your bared and beautiful body.

The compassionate springtime has cleansed it,
  And washed it white as the snow,
Has healed it of all its fevers,
  And winnowed it of its woe—
The cooling rainfall has cleansed it.

Above your grave, in the springtime,
  I saw it, risen again,
Laugh up through glad rain-drops, a flower
  That swayed in the wind and the rain—
Drenched in the joy of the springtime.

SONGS FROM BEYOND DEATH

I: PHANTASMIA

The wind of morning has blown out the stars,
  And the pale trees stir idly in the Park—
  In fear and mystery ebbs out the dark,
Beyond the dawning and the cloudy bars,
  Along the gray sky-mark.

Oh, what is this dull portent of unquiet
  That creeps upon me with the growing day!
  What promised music draws my heart away!
Bend closer, and lean low, that I may sigh it—
  Come close, that I may say.

Across the edges of the world a singing
  Of dim, phantasmal melodies is fled—
  Why will you weep and lower your sad head?
Why will you make your arms so soft and clinging,
  Enamored of the dead?

Beyond the windy and the widening portal
  Of the gray, lonely, and unmeasured dawn
  I move: my soul is summoned and withdrawn;
I fade away, and I am made immortal—
  I pass, and I am gone.

II: THE NEW LOVE

In the silence, in the night,
  When, at your window, the stars shine through—
Under the starlight, under the shining light,
  Over the fallen dew,
  I will come to you.

O love, O sweet,
  Not with the seeking passion of yore,
Not with the eager eyes and the lips that meet,
  Sundered forevermore—
  Oh, not as before.

A deep, a new
  Love that is sorrow fills me now;
Not with the old desire I turn to you—
  Oh, I cannot tell you how.
  Oh, I *love* you now.

Dear heart, dear face,
  So lovable, so absurd, so dear,
How shall I think of you now as in the old days!
  A pity, deeper and more clear,
  Dwells in me here.

Alas, alas,
  Not with the seeking passion of yore,
Bending down in the night I will kiss you as I pass,
  Once, and forevermore—
  Oh, not as before.

III: VALEDICTION

Look, for the arches of the east grow light,
  And the pure brows of morning pale and dim—
  From flaming lips breaks the triumphal hymn;
The hidden fire, immaculately bright,
  Pants on the radiant rim,

And the huge city, dumb and undivining,
  Toward that exalted beauty seems to lean
  In yearning silence—in the vast, serene
Flame of the splendor of the morning shining,
  Made laughable and mean.

I see the human, and holy beauty, blended,
Touch lips to lips in the white light of morn—
O lesser, human beauty, and laughed to scorn,
I love you more! O temporal and splendid!
O dust, whereof I was born!

To myriad pipes beyond the morning shrilling,
The tides of sleep ebb to the unknown sea—
I am caught up and carried far and free
On the wide waste of uttermost music thrilling
Into eternity.

Now more than ever the old human sorrow
Touches my heart with longing vast and vain,
Now more than ever I yearn to you again:
Ah, nevermore to know of joy or sorrow—
Ah, nevermore, of pain.

I, too, have borne them—I am rapt above you
Into the heaven of heavens keen and pale;
Over my mouth falls the eternal veil.
Hail, all men born, and yet to be—I love you!
All men that have been, hail!

IV: A VOICE AMONG THE STARS

Beyond the topmost star of highest heaven,
And murmurous motion of the wheeling spheres,
I am enthroned at last above the years,
I am caught up beyond the shining Seven.

My song is ended and my singing done,
Now have I put aside these earthly things;
My soul takes flight on unremembering wings
Beyond the fire of morning—risen and gone.

Alas, how like we are—all men—alas.
O brother in the universal doom,
Even from the womb, even to the conquering tomb,
I, too, have lived! I hail you as I pass.

Now, as you read these verses from afar—
This very moment, from this woven rhyme,
I cry to you out of the wheels of Time,
I call to you across the morning-star.

V: SONG FROM HEAVEN

Sleep on, I lie at heaven's high oriels,
Over the stars, that murmur as they go,
Lighting your lattice-window far below—
And every star some of the glory spells
Whereof I know.

I have forgotten you, long, long ago,
Like the sweet, silver singing of thin bells
Ended, or music fading faint and low.
Sleep on, I lie at heaven's high oriels,
Who loved you so.

LOVE AND LIBERATION

(1913)

For from myself your bounty liberates me,
And from all other selves—set free, and lost
In the one being that still re-creates me
And mixes me with all I love the most.

SONGS

I

Oh, far beyond the sorrow of myself
I move to you—as the waning winter moves
Toward the dear spring, leaving himself behind,
Lest, with one touch, he mar the self he loves.

II

The lightning flashed, and lifted
The lids of heaven apart,
The fiery thunder rolled you,
All night long, through my heart.

From dreams of you at dawn
I rose to the window-ledge:
The storm had died away—
The lake lapped on the sedge.

The lyre of heaven trembled
Still, with the thought of you—
The twilight on the waters,
And all my spirit, too.

III

Lift your arms to the stars
And give an immortal shout!
Not all the veils of darkness
Can put your beauty out.

You are armed with love, with love,
Nor all the powers of fate
Can touch you with a spear—
Nor all the hands of hate.

What of good and evil,
  Hell, and Heaven above—
Trample them with love!
  Ride over them with love!

IV

O belovèd, when I heard it,
  From your lips, my very name
First, how like a song it sounded—
  Still the same, yet not the same!

To that word another meaning
  Then was given, and a joy,
All tongues after yours, repeating,
  Never wholly may destroy.

V

The morning-star is burning,
  Through rifted clouds withdrawn,
A single flaming taper
  In the bridal-chamber of dawn.

No sound disturbs the quiet—
  Silence forevermore.
Drawn are the twilit curtains,
  Barred is the golden door.

VI

I sing the immortality of your body,
  A source and a wellhead of immortal things—
The terror of her secret and shadowy places,
  And the sad fount from which all being springs;

Immortal from generation to generation,
  Re-arisen with every form of fleeting breath—
Beloved and adored, a refuge and a salvation,
  The source of life amid the wastes of death.

VII

Along the mournful eastern rim
  Day lifts a flaming crest—
Ah, love, the night, with all its joy,
  Ebbs out along the west.
I would not rise with day but die
  With darkness, at your breast.

VIII

Though I left you in the morning
  And walked amid the crowd,
The nightingales followed singing
  Still, in my heart, aloud.

Oh, and the gracious secret
  Within me, no one guessed—
But I bore you within my body,
  I bore you within my breast,

I bore you within my spirit,
  Though hidden and far away,
As the stars, unseen but burning
  Still, in the heaven of day.

IX

Where the feet belovèd tread,
  The urgent flowers throng—
Light wakes, sound issues, breathless
  Beats the heart of song.

The old and the sacred challenge
  Summons and compels;
Up through the breast of being
  The immortal wonder wells.

Song, that was laid at rest,
  Again must learn to live—
Love, that has given all,
  Again must die to give.

X

I roamed, in the gray evening, over field and hill—
  Above me the pale clouds were restless wanderers;
And when the day was gone, and all the fields were still,
  The thought of you, deep in my heart, was like a thousand stars.

XI

Your body's motion is like music—
  Her stride, ecstatical and bright,
Moves to the rhythm of dumb music,
  The unheard music of delight.

The silent splendor of the Creation
  Speaks through your body's stately strength,
And the lithe harmony of beauty
  Undulates through its lovely length—

And, rhythmically, your bosom's arches,
  Alternately, with every breath,
Lift lifeward in long lines of beauty,
  And lapse along the slopes of death.

XII

Fear not the powers below,
  Fear not the powers above,
Nor death, nor fate, nor hate—
  More terrible is love.

Though you fly before the morning
  Till the east become the west,
You shall meet him, mouth to mouth—
  You shall meet him, breast to breast.

All heaven's heads bow down,
  And all the throats of hell
Cry up to him; his face
  Is holy and terrible.

XIII

Bury me east or west, when you come I will rise to greet you;
  I will rise to greet you with love if you come where I lie in the south;
If you come to my grave in the north, with love I will rise to greet you—
  And a song on my mouth.

XIV

Oh, would in the moment of love
  I might bid the stars stand still
And the wheel of the world repose,
  Fixed and immovable—

Ere the vision be shattered, and headlong
  From our dream in the heights we are hurled,
From the cry of our spirits in choir,
  Back into the pit of the world.

XV

To live, to breathe, to love,
  Is a miracle strange and good,
Familiar as the sunlight,
  But not to be understood.

I cannot understand it—
  Though I touch your hand,
Though at your heart I lie,
  I cannot understand.

XVI

All honey and gold your body is, of fashion
  Lovely and liberal; in a world of sadness,
  Bearing the old and the barbaric gladness,
The ruddy joy, the bounteous compassion.

Her beauty's challenge, like clear trumps of warning
  Blown from the throne of God with royal splendor,
  Summons to love—the eloquent and tender
Lines of her grace, unfolded like the morning.

Ever she sounds, with royal reverberation
  Of ringing pulses and rhythm of grace supernal,
  The call to joy, amid the doom eternal—
The golden words of the great invitation.

XVII

Under the flowing robe of our folded love
  In the bright rhythm of riotous ecstasy,
Rapt, from ourselves to the stars we reach upward, made one
  With the world-rhythm of all things striving to be—
Trampling down death with fierce rapture, we triumph for one
  Magnificent moment of rapt immortality.

XVIII

O sweet, are the hours thorny—
  Do the hours bruise you, sweet!
Lay my heart between,
  Lay my heart at your feet.

Does it beat against them rudely!
  Tread it into the ground—
The blood that leaps to kiss them
  Shall heal them of their wound.

XIX

White morning awakes,
  Dawn breaks her bars,
  God's breath through the stars
Flickers and shakes.

Again to the sky
  Leaps the day with delight,
  Again turns the night
To his bosom to die.

With fierce passion they move,
  With the rapture of pain,
  Re-arisen again
From the fountains of love.

In the old weary way,
  The old beauty is done—
  Like a lover the sun
Leaps to the day.

Oh, and I with the rest,
  I, tireless, too—
  I, unto you,
I, to your breast.

XX

I have found peace at last,
  Not in the desert wide,
Nor on the hills of dream,
  With ecstasy for bride—

But peace within your arms,
  When all is said and done,
When beauty's hands are folded
  And the race of joy is run.

XXI

All my love for my sweet
  I bared, one day, to her—
Carelessly she took it,
  And like a conqueror.

She bowed the neck of my soul
  To fit it to her yoke,
She bridled the lips of song—
  Fear within me awoke.

But love cried, "Swiftly, swiftly
  Bear her along the road:
Beautiful is the goal,
  And beauty is the goad."

XXII

Darkness, that dies that day may live, and daylight, that slowly,
  Tenderly, dies away at the dear touch of dusk,
Lovers insatiable, each at the breast of the other
  Ever again is slain, ever again reborn.

XXIII

The air is full of dawn and spring—
  Outside the room I see
A swallow, like a shaft of light,
  Shift sideways suddenly.

There is no place for death at all,
  In earth or heaven above—
He never yet believed in death,
  Who ever learned to love.

Build me a tomb when I am dead,
  But leave a window free,
That I may watch the swallow's flight,
  And spring come back to me.

Build me a tomb of steel and stone,
  But leave one window free,
That I may feel the spring come back,
  And you come back to me.

XXIV

Who mixes with radiant beauty,
  Himself to beauty grows—
Fresh with the rose-leaf, slips
  The raindrop from the rose.

The cloud, that to the sunrise
  Stoops, as to a bride,
Bright from her breast returns,
  Quickened and glorified.

So, lovelier from your lips
  Each day I rise again,
And stain against your breast
  My own a lovelier stain.

Saturate with yourself,
  Drenched with your loveliness,
A little nearer my own
  The heart of beauty I press.

XXV

The twilight is starred,
  The sun has arisen—
Light breaks from the east,
  And song from his prison.

Faint odors and sounds
  The west-wind discloses,
Of flowers and birds,
  Of laughter and roses.

It is time to be gone,
  Day scatters the gloom—
But still at my side,
  But here in the room,

Like the angel of life,
  Too kind to depart,
You hang at my lips,
  You hang at my heart.

XXVI

The belovèd about herself
  Creates new loveliness,
Her being overflows
  Into beauty, for sheer excess.

Song and love and courage,
And all glad things that are,
Kindle about her beauty,
As the light about a star.

XXVII

Two cloud-heights high the evening-star
Has risen in the eastern zone,
Already wearier the worn wrath,
Westward, of day, wanes overthrown—
Ah sweet, now is your hunger lit,
Like a pale star that burns alone,
To have me yours, to have me yours,
Ere twilight into night has grown.

The last light widens in the west,
Star upon star ascends her throne—
Ah, night shall to their watching bare
What many a night before has shown.
The last bird hushes. Now your heart
Beats in the twilight all alone,
To have me yours, to have me yours—
Ere darkness I must be your own.

XXVIII

Sunrise cries out to day, and morning murmurs to noon,
"Oh, to be wearied out at the belovèd lips!"
"Blessèd, from her, is the pain, and the weariness, from her,
Dearer than all glad things," twilight whispers to night.

XXIX

I am filled, I am filled,
I am filled full of you,
As the meadows with light,
As the morning with dew.

Mine alone, of all born,
  Is elected the breast
To be bearer of you
  To the east and the west.

For joy, all the day,
  For joy, all the night,
My love cries aloud—
  I laugh for delight.

The beautiful burden
  At heart, I go forth,
Drunken with song,
  To the south and the north.

O all men and women
  And angels, draw near—
Look in my heart!
  Look, what is here!

XXX

Song, at the source of song,
  Sweet it is to confess,
And loveliness to humble
  At the feet of loveliness.

XXXI

Under the arch of the morning
  I raise the voice of my song,
I sing the belovèd's beauty,
  Her body stalwart and strong,

Her bosom, slender and fair,
  Virgin—a promise of things;
'Mid the manifold choir of all,
  The morning's murmuring strings,

To the holy of heaven's holies
  I press, with lips that rejoice—
Under the altar of heaven
  I lift the song of my voice.

I sing the bosom of love,
  Bounteous, east and west—
The sad and the sacred lips,
  And the sacrificial breast,

The arch of her body's endurance,
  Doomed to endure and fulfill,
The patient pulse of her passion,
  Her splendor, stately and still.

At the sound of my spirit's crying,
  O'er the world the antiphonal choir
Breaks forth, of the mingled delight
  Of the lips that endure, and desire—

The woven voice of their warring,
  Made one with fierce rapture: the moan
Of the love that triumphs, the triumph
  Of the love that is overthrown.

The holy altar of heaven,
  Crowded with tapers dim,
Trembles for rapture, and flickers,
  At the breath of the sound of my hymn.

XXXII

Oh, the challenge that burns
  In a laughing girl's eyes,
The boy's heart that yearns,
  The heart that replies—

The joy that fulfills,
  And the love that endures,
The heart that follows,
  The heart that lures:

In the old, fierce war
  Of woman and man,
Their secret battle
  Since time began,

Dear foes forever,
  And opposites still—
Fulfillers, forever,
  Of the one will.

XXXIII

As the morning-star ecstatic,
  Lost, into the morning moves;
So my spirit fades forever
  Into the dear self she loves.

As wild rivers pour and perish,
  Fall and flow into the sea;
So my self runs on with longing,
  Toward the self I long to be.

There, at last, I know my spirit
  Radiantly self-slain, self-lost,
One with the great self of beauty,
  Part of all I love the most.

XXXIV

When our two hearts
  Rhyme in the dawn,
Beyond all life
  I am withdrawn—

Beyond all evil
And all good,
With you, in a
White solitude.

Urging beyond them
Breath on breath,
Faint follow the feet
Of life and death.

XXXV

Almost against your heart
My beating heart has grown,
Hardly your very self
Is separate from my own.

Yet, virgin as the morning,
Unconquerable and free,
Strange as at the first meeting,
Ever you come to me.

Oh, the lure of you, the secret,
Fairer a thousandfold—
Like the stars, is ever new,
Like the stars, is ever old.

XXXVI

In the moment of death, as in a dream,
Bow down your heart upon me from above,
Your lips as you used to do;
That the moment of death may seem
To come, even as once the moment of love,
From you, dear—at least from you.

XXXVII

Life burns us up like fire,
  And song goes up in flame;
The body returns in ashes
  To the ashes whence it came.

Out of things it rises,
  And laughs, and loves, and sings;
Slowly it subsides
  Into the char of things.

Yet soars a voice above it—
  Love is holy and strong:
The best of us forever
  Escapes, in love and song.

XXXVIII

What you have given me,
  Night nor day,
Nor death, nor time,
  Can take away.

O most adored,
  O my delight,
The day shall hear me,
  And the night!

I will sound your name
  Through heaven and hell
And the starred morning's
  Hollow shell.

I will make this joy
  Upon my lips
Your trumpet,
  To the doom's eclipse!

XXXIX

Past wood and waste and valley,
  Over mountain and wave,
Song returns to your breast,
  His cradle and his grave.

Run, the familiar orbit,
  The circuit of beauty run,
Fulfilled the perfect cycle,
  Through the many back to one,

To his sunset in your bosom,
  Homeward his voices throng—
To the wellhead of all beauty,
  The sunrise of all song.

XL

Even as day to sunrise, even as dusk to darkness
  Runs, to kiss it with love and jubilation of joy,
Sweet, at the touch of your lips—vehemently affirming,
  So my love to your love runs, answering "Yes!"

XLI

In the self belovèd
  Song and speech at last
Close, with tired longing,
  All their sorrows passed.

Weariness seraphic,
  Of supreme release,
Folds them into silence
  And eternal peace.

Gained the utmost harbor
And the farthest goal,
Life and death in splendor
Dawn upon the soul,

As on seas at sunset,
Stilled from shore to shore,
The effortless, high beauties
Rise forevermore.

XLII

I shake my hair in the wind of morning,
For the joy within me that knows no bounds;
I echo back the vibrant beauty
With which heaven's hollow lute resounds.

I shed my song on the feet of all men,
On the feet of all shed out like wine—
On the whole and the hurt I shed my bounty,
The beauty within me that is not mine.

Turn not away from my song, nor scorn me,
Who bear the secret that binds the sky
And the stars together, but know, within me
There speaks another, more wise than I.

Nor spurn me here from your heart, to hate me—
Yet hate me here if you will, not so
Myself you hate but the love within me
That loves you, whether you would or no.

Here love returns with love to the lover,
And beauty unto the heart thereof,
And hatred unto the heart of the hater,
Whether he would or no, with love.

RETURN TO NEW YORK

Far and free, o'er the lifting sea, the lapsing wastes and the waves that roam,
Hour by hour with sleepless power the keel has furrowed the soft, sad foam;
Slowly now, with steadier prow, we steer through the dim, gray fog-banks home.

Faint and far from across the bar the first lines burn, of the cloudy day—
From whistle and horn, in the twilit morn, low murmurs are wafted across the bay.
The fleet, sweet swing of the sea-bird's wing beats down the darkness, and dies away.

Dawn—and lo, as the drifted snow that melts in the sun on a mountain height,
As the veils from a bride, that fall and divide, the fog-veils sunder, and leave in sight,
Like Venice dim on the waters rim, the city, my mother, bared and bright.

In the first hours her stately towers and clustered summits show faint and fair:
Mother, mother, to thee and none other the heart cries out, in the morning there.
Solemnly, slowly, the white mists wholly fade, and the whole sweet form lies bare.

Hail, all hail, with the dawn for veil, the sea for throne, and the stars for crown!
Mother, thy son, his journeying done, triumphantly here at thine heart bows down—
Love that sings, on the sea-wind's wings runs on to claim thee his very own.

MORNING SONG

Cried the sunrise to the morning,
"Let me render up, and spend
On your beauty, all my ardor—
Love and longing, to the end.

"O most radiantly lovely,
Life for love is good to give;
Better in the self belovèd
Than ourselves it is to live.

"O dear life to follow after,
All the life within me throngs
From my breast to the belovèd's,
To the breast where life belongs!

"To your bosom I confide it,
All the longing, the delight,
That must die to love you wholly."
Eastward, all the day grew bright.

MID-OCEAN

Heaven's ardent scope over the midnight sea,
Bowed down with reverent stars from rim to rim,
Bowed slowly down with weight of solemn stars,
From the crowded core to where the last, low wave
Washes her flames—the while my spirit here
Sits, like a star, the central flame of all.

ESTHER

You that I gave of my youth,
With you my youth is fled—
The passionate ardor, the truth
Of the first, fair love that is dead,
The fierce, sweet fire of youth.

Where shall I find them at last!
  Roam I the city in vain,
Seeking a day that is past,
  The old, lost rapture again,
The light of a sky overcast.

You were all that to greet
  Love found lovely and fair—
Swift and heedless and sweet,
  Vagrant, wild as the air,
Fleet as the wind is fleet,

Tyrannous, pitiless, gay,
  Not to be caught in love's net—
Felt I my life, as it lay
  Hushed at our lips where they met,
Stealthily stolen away.

Ever my life, and again,
  At the soft pang of your touch,
Thrilled—and ever again,
  Sweet, of yourself overmuch
Filled, gave over again.

Ah, the kind beauty, the first
  Lips that lured us to love,
Breast that bowed to our thirst
  First, from heaven above—
Heart love leaned upon first!

Once on a night that is gone,
  Once in a twilight adored,
You, in your beauty alone,
  Sweet, unsheathed like a sword,
Slenderly trembled and shone.

Reckless with love and with laughter,
  Where are you vanished away—
Loved and forsaken, and after
  Followed by love all the way,
All the long journey thereafter?

All the wild dreams that love wove
  Once, for temple and brow,
Waned—and the halo thereof!
  Whom are you cherishing now?
Whom do you give of your love,

'Spoiled or despoiling? Or who
  Now lies meshed in those smiles—
In the sweet snaring of you
  Caught, the old lovable wiles,
Ways of your love that I knew?

Dear, do you give them—nor spare—
  All the old secrets, to him—
Soft lips, and shadowing hair?
  Is he or sturdy or slim,
Dark, or ruddy and fair?

Dark and dead lies the town—
  Seeking, I wander astray.
Lost one, my loved one, my own
  Youth with you vanished away,
With you my youth went down.

ILLUSION

When spring was come over the lonely hills,
  I thought of one who was not come with the spring—
  I said, I will rise and seek her, following
Where the heart wills.

Surely, I know love is a joyous thing—
  Therefore, will she not come to me when she wills,
  Dancing along the meadows, skipping upon the hills,
And laugh, and sing?

There is nothing lying beyond the hills,
  No sweet, lost land or love, or anything—
  Only the wind cries, and the flowers spring
Along the rills.

"Give me back the things that the heart wills!
  Give me back the land where the stars sing!"
  I wander over the meadows, murmuring—
Crying beyond the hills.

MUSIC

The rhythm of the eternal silence, the voices,
Inaudibly interwoven together, of all things
Lapsing and lifting, the oceanic beauty
Whose soundless waters fold, forever flowing,
Our world of tumult, the voice of encircling silence,
Man, for a moment, may evoke in music,
With friction of resonant strife, sonorous, forcing
From the deep bosom and heart, with holy fingers
That grasp into the sullen core of silence,
Her rolling voice—with ardor of vibrant friction—
Till almost before the soul it shine and sparkle
Glistening hues. But the heart fails, the hand wearies—
Backward ebbs the stream to the boundless ocean,
And the continuous ecstasy to hold longer
Baffles the will; radiance melts into darkness,
Unto our eyes, and harmony into silence,
Unto our ears: but underneath is radiance
Interminably proceeding—underneath, music;
Ere the first note it was, and forever after

Proceeds, when the last note has ceased to speak it—
Eternal music, whereof each audible portion
Is but as the crest of a wave that foams for a moment
Upon the bosom of the unbounded ocean,
Or a remembered dream in a sleep enduring.

It is the magnificent garment of the Godhead,
That somberly, and with undulous motion trailing,
Billows gigantically behind His footstep
Heard as of thunder, in sorrow and reluctance
Following, as He draws it sadly sweeping
Ever around the dumb, waste capes of being,
With a vast sough and whisper oceanic.

The gorgeous hollow thereof is drenched with darkness,
Tragic with twilight, peacock-colored, spattered,
Solemn with vast excesses of waste shadow
And mournful grandeur of iridescent progressions,
Starriest tints, and cloudy courts of color
Intricately coördinate. So veering
After the footfall of the high Eternal,
Slow pacing with pomp of terrifical rhythm forward,
Moves the starred train, or canopy, with a motion
Disconsolate, inconsolable with beauty,
Vastly disdainful, through the Void forever.

RAIN-WIND

My longing, like the rain-wind
  Whose sorrow bends above
The young and the folded flower,
  Came sighing to my love.

I told her all my secret,
  I told her all my pain—
She opened all her beauty
  To the sad and sighing rain.

And all her beauty's flower
  Fell wasted, leaf by leaf,
The young and the virgin wonder—
  And left me to my grief.

TO A POET IN DESPAIR

Since first, and after break the heavy chain:
What once we sing we afterwards attain.

Nor seek without you for the inner light—
Within you lies the fire and the might.

Rebuild it in yourself with fierce endeavor,
Build up a refuge in yourself forever.

By the outer terrors baffled, but still glorious,
Into herself the soul returns, victorious.

Baffled and wounded on the road she trod,
Up through herself the soul returns to God.

TO MARY THE MOTHER

With a multitudinous sound of strings
And a flame of light,
With a clashing of spears, and fierce, unbearable things,
He should have come, in his might—
With the uncrowning of many kings:
O watcher beside a manger, bow down your face, cover your face in the night!

There was none with him, there was none like him, there was none before him,
That was so sweet;
They shall mock him, they shall crucify him, they shall abhor him,

They shall wound his feet;
They shall tear him down, they shall call him God, they shall adore him:
O mother beside a dead son, bow down your face, cover your face in his winding-sheet!

PLAINT

Brief is man's travail here, and transitory
His wrath, that soon is spent—
Brief his lament,
Lifted in vain against the harsh decrees
Of the high destinies,
That move not for the murmur of his woe:
Even as snow
On sunny meadows, as a lover's story
Told in an April twilight long ago,
Brief is he even as these,
His little hour of tumult or of glory—
And to what end devised we may not guess,
Considering, as we go
Toward the same shadows, bearing the same spark,
His vanity and utter nothingness.
Yet, in the lonely dark,
Dear is the spirit; bitterly we know
Earth has one burden more, one spirit less.

HEADLANDS

As water unto water calls and cries,
Over the wide wastes and the fields of sea,
As the long, lapsing floors that tremulously
From land-line unto land-line fall and rise,
So the dark ocean of thought's eternities
Rolls round the soul, that ever longs to see

Beyond the circle of flat immensity,
From star to opposite star of the dumb skies.

No sound of horn, or gong, or whistle crying,
On the untrodden spaces sounds afar—
Around all men the infinite waters roll;
Yet there are some who, wind and wave defying,
Fronting the waste, toward the new worlds that are,
Jut forth like crags—the headlands of the soul.

TWILIGHT ON MID-OCEAN

I heard the sailors sing, at twilight, on the Deep—
Far forward in the dusk: from heaven's cloudy dome,
Westward, a few faint stars awoke like eyes from sleep,
And a dim phosphorescence of fire lined the foam
Driven along the waste like flocks of herded sheep.

And ground-swell upon ground-swell echoed, with tread on tread,
The sob all round the world, of the despondent sea—
In the half-light I waited, in wonder and in dread,
The monster of the Vast, old as eternity,
Along the implacable rim should lift a snaky head.

I thought of all the ships that, with full sail unfurled,
Upon these desert ways had sought the immortal dream,
And the adventurous breast, prophetic of a world,
Islands of promised peace beyond the morning-stream—
Visions, before whose breath the barks of old were whirled.

The sailors' voices sounded far-off, as if in sleep.
Along the vast and scornful surface of the sea
A multitudinous breath of laughter seemed to creep—
And, like a long-drawn sigh, died fitfully away.
An oceanic odor arose upon the Deep.

THE CHEATED ONE

Where is he, the cheated one,
  That the world has robbed of you,
His belovèd ere he came,
  And the love he never knew—

The kind solace of your breast,
  Meant for him, and him alone;
All that tender loveliness,
  Plundered now of every one?

Dear, each gesture, each caress,
  Ways of loving, every whim
Of wild pity, every kiss,
  Meant for him, and only him!

Still about your presence clings,
  Wistful, sorrowful, and wise,
Ever that reproachful ghost,
  And the haunting of his eyes.

THE NINTH SYMPHONY

Beauty here is found at rest in the peace thereof,
Love that, bending down, looks back on the pain of love,
Sorrow smiling on herself from the heights above.

DUET

Death. Now ebbs the twilight from the melting land,
The tremulous light runs low
Along the rim of the world. Give me your hand—
Come, for it must be so.

Love. O sweet, on my breast
Come once again,
Here, as of old!
Sweet is the pain—
Oh, come as of old!
Sweet is the rest.

Death. No more—
Eternal darkness covers up the west.
Come to me as before,
Ere into tumult and distraction's pit
Your wandering feet were sent,
Out of the quiet door—
Ere you were sent out of the mother-breast.

Love. I give you my lips.
Here at my side
Abide, abide—
Here at my lips,
At the breast that bore you,
Though born unto pain!
Love and forgive,
Love leans above you—
Give life and live,
Once, once again!
I love you, I love you.

Death. Nay, turn to me who am the rest,
Nor heed the siren voice that, singing, lures—
Give heed, nor hearken.
Only in me the immortal peace endures.

Love. I am the sunrise,
I am the light,
Death is the night—

Drink of mine eyes!
Turn to the light!
Though you be weary,
Wearier yet
You shall grow, nor regret—
Here on my bosom
Reborn, re-arise
To new life and new living:
Sweet is the pain,
Sweet to be slain
In the old way again,
Living and giving.

Death. Come, for the twilight covers up the west—
Give me your hand.

Love. Sweet, are you weary?

Chorus. Faint, on the inexorable breast
Lean—on the somber bosom that cannot understand.
Sleep, and have rest.

Love. I am the sunrise,
I am the light,
Death is the night
Till the new dawn rise.
Though you have left me,
Love will not leave you—
Love will receive you,
Love will retrieve you,
In the new sunrise.
Sleep, and have rest.

THE FRIEND

Afar the gray sea glimmers,
  The sea-birds wheel and pass—
I lie alone in the twilight
  Here, by the thin sea-grass.

A molten radiance slowly
  Wells through the sunset dim—
The thought of you, that tenderly
  Quickens along the rim,

A golden, a luminous rapture;
  Heaven glows on either hand:
What liberal thought and lovely,
  Widens on sea and land—

Makes spacious the void around me,
  For breathing-spaces! See,
My spirit, too, widens exultant—
  Large-hearted, fresh, and free,

Drinks in deep draughts around her,
  To the deep core shot through:
Your great and gracious presence,
  The generous thought of you,

Of those great days together,
  Your golden and royal ways—
Lifts me, like golden music,
  Out of the little days.

DUST AND LIGHT

(1919)

TO HARRIET W. WILSON

Grasshopper, your tiny song
And my poem alike belong
To the dark and silent earth,
From which all poetry has birth;
All we say and all we sing
Is but as the murmuring
Of that drowsy heart of hers
When from her deep dream she stirs:
If we sorrow, or rejoice,
You and I are but her voice.

Deftly does the dust express,
In mind, her hidden loveliness—
And, from her cool silence, stream
The cricket's cry and Dante's dream;
For the earth, that breeds the trees,
Breeds cities too, and symphonies,
Equally her beauty flows
Into a savior, or a rose—
Looks down in dream, and from above
Smiles at herself in Jesus' love;
Christ's love and Homer's art
Are but the workings of her heart,
Through Leonardo's hand she seeks
Herself, and through Beethoven speaks,
In holy thunderings around,
The awful message of the ground.

The serene and humble mold
Does in herself all selves enfold,
Kingdoms, destinies, and creeds,
Proud dreams, heroic deeds,
Science, that probes the firmament,
The high, inflexible intent
Of one, for many, sacrificed;

Plato's brain, the heart of Christ,
All love, all legend, and all lore
Are in the dust forevermore.

Even as the growing grass,
Up from the soil religions pass,
And the field that bears the rye
Bears parables and prophecy—
Out of the earth the poem grows,
Like the lily, or the rose;
And all man is, or yet may be,
Is but herself in agony
Toiling up the steep ascent
Toward the complete accomplishment
When all dust shall be—the whole
Universe—one conscious soul.

Ah, the quiet and cool sod
Bears in her breast the dream of God.

If you would know what earth is, scan
The intricate, proud heart of man,
Which is the earth articulate,
And learn how holy and how great,
How limitless, and how profound,
Is the nature of the ground—
How, without question or demur,
We may entrust ourselves to her
When we are wearied out and lay
Our faces in the common clay.

For she is pity, she is love,
All wisdom, she, all thoughts that move
About her everlasting breast
Till she gathers them to rest—
All tenderness of all the ages,

Seraphic secrets of the sages,
Vision and hope of all the seers,
All prayer, all anguish, and all tears,
Are but the dust, that from her dream
Awakes, and knows herself supreme;
Are but earth, when she reveals
All that her secret heart conceals
Down in the dark and silent loam,
Which is ourselves, asleep, at home.

Yea, and this, my poem, too,
Is part of her as dust and dew—
Wherein herself she doth declare,
Through my lips, and say her prayer.

STORM AND SUN

O love, now the herded billows over the windy plain
  Of the trampled sea move thunderously and cast
Their rage on the dark shore, let us set out again,
  Let us make seaward, and be gone at last

Into the choiring, clashing, wild waste of waters strown
  Around us in all their fury, leave behind
The little frets and the fevers—we two alone,
  Heart-free, as once in days long out of mind!

Come, on the swelling pillow of the cold sea-wave lean
  Your cheek, all fiery now—oh, let us press
Forward, the changeful furrows of the flashing foam between,
  With glowing bodies, into the loveliness!

The waves shatter, the billows break us, the sullen wrath
  Of the surf beats down our foreheads; line on line,
Rises the majesty of the sea, to oppose our path
  With tingling bodies through the stinging brine;

But in our jubilant breasts the embattled life at bay
Exults fiercely for joy, the waves cry out
And shout in answering joy, the salt and savage spray
Showers our shoulders in the exuberant bout,

Where we press onward, laughing for lusty love, and the hollows
Receive us, and rise—the foam of the breaker's crest
Unfolds like a flower, and dies of its kiss, and subsides, and follows,
Laughing and loving, where our limbs have pressed;

Till in the lustrous shadow of the dark wave before us
We bow, and from the rolling billow's might
Lift glimmering eyelids up, while hearts and lips in chorus
Mingle with winds and waters their delight.

Hear how the lonely sea-bird screams above the surges
And inland reaches—now, far out, we roam
The desert and dumb vast of the dread sea that urges
Our fitful course far out beyond the foam,

Toward the most pallid rim of cloudy noonday steering
Steadily, while the fluent glooms, and grave,
Lap us and lift, repulse, and pause—the wild and veering
Will of the loving and reluctant wave.

The sombre and immense breast of the huge sea
Lifts in long lines of beauty, the supreme
Bosom with its vast love rises resistlessly—
And lapses in long lines into its dream.

Lone to the last verge, lone—lone—lone—
And void, to where the huddled waters crowd
The brim: along the floor of heaven's darkened throne
Moves, like a ghost, the shadow of a cloud.

Shadow and light pass over, shifting—shine and shade
  Vanish and veer; upon the chilly rim
Kindle, like crowns, the cloud-crests along the east arrayed,
  And swords of flame like swords of the seraphim.

The floors of the sea catch fire, the eye of the world's light
  Dilates—and into a glory of glittering gold
Break the pale greens and purples: the sun in heaven's height
  Unveils himself for all men to behold,

And all the world is a-kindle, behind us and before,
  With fire and color; the heavens roll back their gloom—
From zone to zone, from the zenith to the everlasting floor,
  Reaches one resonant and radiant room.

Light! Light! The astounded, far fields of ocean shine
  Sheer gold and shimmering amber; where we take
The lips of the wave with laughter, your eyes are turned to mine,
  Sweetheart—your eyes that burn for beauty's sake.

They tremble with happy tears, and little words unspoken
  Trouble your lips—dumbly, dumbly we know
Something starry and strange, that the world's wheel has broken,
  Come back to us, out of the long-ago.

Put out your hand—oh, cleave the clasp of the close wave, turning
  Its fire to flowers—put out your hand, and move
Forward into the radiant far reaches round us burning,
  Darling, as once in the old days of love!

Our hearts drink the wrath and the wonder; the breath of the
    boundless spaces
  Hallows our foreheads; the exceeding might
Of moving waters around us is music, and on our faces
  The glory of God is shed, His holy light.

Glimmering meadows miles around,
Drenched with dew and drowsy sound,
Drink the moonlight and the dream;
Veiled in mists the lowlands gleam—
Through wild ways and fragrant aisles
Of the country, miles on miles,
Drifting cloudlike without will—
And soft mist is on the hill.

Everywhere earth's shrill delight
Shakes and shimmers through the night,
Silver tides of music flow
Round the world: the cricket's low
Harp, the starry ecstasy
Of the keen cicada's cry,
With "I love, I love, I love,"
To the cloudless moon above
Lift the old, the endless song;
And the firefly, among
The low boughs and heavy leaves
His hushed flight in silence weaves—
Deeper than the love they sing,
The unutterable thing,
The sheer pang wherewith he glows,
Burns his body as he goes.

Now earth draws the trembling veil
From her bosom cloudy-pale,
And the bridegroom of the night
Flows to her in solemn light—
Memories of the absent sun
Dreaming of his lovely one.

From that fiery embrace
Wearied out, with lifted face,

Tangled hair, and dewy eyes,
Drowsed and murmurous she lies,
In the bride-sleep, the deep bliss
After some exalted kiss,
Swooning through the darkness dim;
Still, with memories of him
Her hushed breath comes fierce and low,
And the love that thrilled her so
Speaks in slumber—from her lips
The deep word of longing slips.

Fragrant is thy flowery hair,
O belovèd: everywhere,
Thy faint odour on the air,
From dread arches of thy grace
Wafted, what dark, secret place,
Beckoning vistas of thy sheer
Maddening loveliness, the dear
Curves of thy bright beauty, all
Lure me to wild love; the call
Of past lives is in my breast,
Intimations, dimly guessed,
Of seraphic, solemn things—
Mingled lips and murmurings,
On cool nights that gave me birth.
Yet, O mother, awful earth,
What stark mystery no less
Irks the bosom that I press
Close against thy carelessness!

Where the holy poem of night,
In veiled music and moonlight,
Shimmering cries, and stars, and dreams,
Onward in soft rhythm streams—
With reluctant pulse and pause
To its lovely ending draws,

Thy long passion; when unroll,
The starred heavens, like a scroll,
The old parable and story,
Some transcendent allegory—
Mother, mother, yet I know
Of cool nights that whispered so
When I was not, long ago;
When thy beauty, murmuring low,
With abandon, like a bride,
Throws her glimmering veils aside,
This dread love I dare not say
Turns my trembling lips away—
Something deeper, something more
Than I ever guessed before,
A new homesickness at heart
Hungering for the home thou art:
As the rivers to the one
Sea with solemn longing run,
So my being to thy breast,
So my sorrow to thy rest.

Thou art mother, thou art bride,
By what dearer name beside
Must I name thee, must I call,
Who art dearer far than all?

On thy heart I lay my head—
Oh, what is it thou hast said!
Secret beautiful and dread;
Lovely moment drawing near;
Thought, most terrible and dear:
To be one with thy complete
Dark, sweet loveliness, my sweet—
One with thy wild will again;
To descend in rushing rain
To thy ravished breast; to pour

Through the veins that I adore;
Drink deep draughts of thee, and grow,
Through long love and longing, so,
Into the belovèd; flow
In thy deepest pulse, at home
In the dark and silent loam
Drenched with thee; and tremble up
In the lily's lifted cup,
Odours, clouds, and starry haze,
Breath of the wet country ways
On cool, moon-clear, fragrant nights;
Or, where thy supreme delight's
Radiant passion draws, aghast,
Sobs of thunder through the Vast—
Shuddering breath and murmur of
Thy fierce wrath of sullen love,
Laughter of thy mingling heart—
In thy lifted lightnings, dart
Through awed heaven's glimmering bound;
With bright laughter all around,
With dark tears, into the ground
Glide, and slake with loving rain
The parched caverns of thy pain.

Rapturous bridal! O wild heart,
To be part of thee, a part
Of this holy beauty here!
Sacred sorrow drawing near!
Sweet surrender! O my sweet,
Longingly my pulses beat!
Dazzling thought, and fearful, of
The dear fury of thy love
Even now that draws me down,
My faint body, to thine own—
Near, and nearer yet, till I
Tangled in thy being lie—

Close, and close, for sheer excess
Wearied out with loveliness—
All this little self, this me,
Soothed into the self of thee,
Rendered up in ecstasy!

Almost now thou seem'st to steal
From my breast the self; I feel
How my being, everywhere,
As in dream, upon the air
Widens round me, till I grow
All I look on, overflow—
And into the life adored
All the life of me is poured;
Through warm portals of thy heart,
Hastening onward where thou art,
Who art all things: in the breeze
Stirring all the tangled trees
To low whispers, how I pass
Through each tiny blade of grass,
Tremble in moonlight, and rise
Looking out of other eyes—
Mystery of mysteries!
Pang of self, and tragical
Birth into the enlightened All!
Oh, dark rapture—to flow, press,
Cease, into thy loveliness;
With exalted weariness,
Render up myself, and be,
Selfless, the dear self of thee—
In divine oblivion
One with the belovèd one!

Where I press my burning face,
Weeds and grasses interlace—
Sweetheart, are these dewy, soft

Tears for me, who must so oft
Perish of thee to be thine?
Deep I drink of you, divine
Dizzy draught, bewildering wine.

In the grass my head is bowed,
The vague moon is in a cloud—
From my breast I feel it stream,
All I loved so, like a dream.
Ah, I cannot understand,
But the wind is like a hand
On my forehead, in caress,
And the earth is tenderness,
While around her sleeplessly
Shrills the restless will-to-be—
Lust for immortality
Shakes in sound, and floats in light,
Through the darkness: through the night,
Clouds, and dreams, and fireflies,
And my songs of her, arise.

GOLDEN NOON

Now part the heavens in cloudless glory,
  And the wide eye of the world's light
Re-opens, like a flower dilating,
  And floods the world with golden might.

Rose of the heaven, heavy flower
  In the clean meadows of the sky,
Shed forth the odor of thy splendor,
  Thy dazzled perfume from on high!

The massive thunder of thy music
  Makes holy harmonies afar,
The starry mouths are mute before thee,
  O sumptuous and sovereign star!

Great chords of light, gigantic, shaken
With heavy vibrance and immense,
The gorgeous trumpets of thy zenith,
And noon of thy magnificence,

Though soundless to the sensual hearing,
With sonant light thrilled through and through—
Thine awful and august desire,
On horns of gold blown down the blue!

Priest of the world, in radiance folded
And veils of blue Immensity!
Shed thy triumphant light before us
And trail thy robes across the sea.

Shadows and star-beams fly before thee;
The level floors of the blue vast,
With lapse of trampling waves adore thee—
And the soft twilight thrills, aghast.

Like phantoms, or like ghosts, dividing
Before thy forehead's flame, they flee—
Darkness and dreams in shifting hollows,
And shadow-clouds across the sea,

When, on the wave of morning steering,
Dawns round the world thy steady prow—
In rosy foam of light, unfolding,
Heaven's billowing deeps dissolve; but now

The mellow fields lie hushed and helpless
Beneath thine all-prevailing might,
And the crushed earth bleeds oozy color
And golden drippings of thy light;

Till every heart is searched and riven
With eager ardor of thine own—
Till, from horizon to horizon,
And blazing zone to blazing zone,

The trumpets of thy light are sounded,
And the wide heavens, clear of gloom,
Clean-swept, are blinded and bedazzled,
And bared for thee—one radiant room.

MOONLIT EARTH

The quiet earth, in cool felicity,
With drowsy lips, that all day long implored
The importunate sun, her lover and her lord,
Sleeps in the moonlight of his memory:
Though far from her, though vanished utterly
Down fiery spaces, still his love is poured
Backward, in dream, upon the most adored,
With holy moonlight haunting land and sea.

Still to that heart of darling love he yearns
Homeward in light, while, from lost yesterday,
Upon her face his lonely kisses fall—
Remembering, remembering, he returns
To the dear place, and sheds from far away
The moonlight of his memory over all.

SUMMER DAWN

Here, in the quiet chamber where I lie,
Out of the hungry hollows of the night
There comes a somber and an ancient cry—
Dawn flowers up along the windy sky,
Immense and white.

Laughable sadness fills me silently:
In the lone hour of morning, whip-poor-will,
You are the wail of days that used to be,
The voice of my lost childhood calling me,
Beyond the hill.

DEPARTURE

One last look, and then farewell to you forever,
Room that I have loved, dearest place of all—
Softly through the window pours the lonely moonlight,
Slumbers on the bed, slumbers on the wall.

Faint, in glimmering fields, the grasshoppers are shrilling,
As on nights of old; and a cricket, too,
Ever his one note, sounds solemnly and slowly—
Branches, in the light, droop, all drenched with dew.

Here is the low table where we laughed together,
Chairs, where we have sat, huddle side by side:
In the quiet night-time the old house is musing
Deep on vanished days and old dreams that died.

Where my youth has sorrowed, now lies only moonlight,
Moonlight on the bed, moonlight on the floor—
And across the pillow where your head lay dreaming,
O my lost belovèd, moonlight evermore.

EMBARKATION

Land calls to land, and from the huddled ways
Of field and city many a sound is heard—
But we must follow down the trackless path
Of the unfurrowed and abundant sea,
Over the mute road of unending waves,
The desert of the Deep, divine and sad,

Where, between daybreak and dim starlight, blows
Immensity, which is the breath of God,
Between earth's warring nations ringed around.

THE FAR LAND

We are sighing for you, far land,
We are praying for you, far land,
All our life long—working, waiting, night and day:
But as waves that die to reach the farther shore,
Break our hearts, that die to reach you evermore—
All our hearts are breaking, breaking toward that shore,
O far land, so near and far away!

At the lips of the belovèd,
At the breast of the belovèd,
Like waves that seek the land, and sink forlorn,
Oh, to reach it we have died: but to that beach
Where the belovèd is, love may not reach—
Our children's children, even, shall not reach
The far land, where all of us were born.

Through the terror of the ages
We have sought it, till the ages
Have stamped our lifted faces with our love:
But long though we have wandered, where we are
The far land is not; oh, that land is far—
Beyond the night, beyond the morning-star
The far land grows farther as we move.

In music and in story,
In song and sacred story,
We yearned to it—in color and in sound:
But swifter than the soul the secret flies,
The vision fades; beyond, beyond, it lies,
Beyond all songs, beyond all harmonies—
The far land, that we have never found.

In the sweat of daily labor,
In the anguish of our labor,
We strove to bind it fast in steel and stone:
But lo, the walls were dust, the work was naught,
And oh, it was not what the heart had sought—
'Twas something dearer that our blood had bought,
The far land, that we have never known.

Beyond long sea-horizons,
Beyond sad sea-horizons,
Our furrowing keels have wandered in that quest:
Beyond the sunset, tremulous and dear
Glimmered that land, but as our prows drew near,
Faded the dream; the far land is not here—
The far land, the home-land of the breast.

So we built ourselves a heaven,
Our God we set in heaven—
With prayer and praise we wrought them to our will:
But they could not fill the measure of our love
For the far land—oh, they were not great enough!
There is nothing, there is nothing great enough—
The far land is something greater still.

We are sighing for you, far land,
We are dying for you, far land,
In the struggle, in the bloody ruck, and blind:
We are coming, we are coming—every breath
Is a wave that bears us nearer to you; death
Seals our cry. Oh, might our children find ere death
The far land, that we have died to find!

LITANY

Faint as the murmuring of a widowed crone
That mourns one memory forevermore,
(Now that she sees it all—oh, now at last!)

Hark—in the church, the thin voice of the world,
Repeating sad, repentant words, and slow,
For the old murder of her patient Christ.
Oh, now she sorrows for him—hark, how soft—
Who loved her in her youth when all her breast
Was strong and cruel as a laughing girl's.

WOMAN: THE RETURN THROUGH LOVE

Your sweetness the proud heart of pain
Beseeches to be born again,
With promise of your loveliness,
That lures him lifeward still—to press
Forward, nor faint, but for your sake
The ancient yoke and burden take,
Renewed, the lonely and forlorn
Adventure; till, from you reborn,
Antæus-like, touching the earth
And holy wellhead of our birth,
We, in the child's heart, re-assume,
With lips of laughter, through the gloom,
Our painful pilgrimage anew,
Back to the motherland of you.

Your pity falls like healing rain
On life, that brings to you again,
Still urgent evermore to be,
His prayer for immortality—
Ah, well enough you know the quest
That leads him homeward to your breast.
Hearth of the race, whereon the light
Of the world's fire is kept bright
Perpetually! Sacred spring
From which we all are wandering,
Whither we all return at last

And, the long exile overpassed,
From mother to belovèd, run
Love's orbit, till all love be done!

Our varying and veering will
Deserts you, and desires still;
We are the wanderers—you, the home
Toward which we ever range and roam;
All we are wanderers, roam and range
The hills of chance—you know not change,
Keeping perpetually pure
The dream whereby we all endure.
O sacred wellhead, fountain-sun!
O far land, wooed, yet never won,
And still beyond us! Steady light,
That leads us wandering in the night!
Still we seek backward, still return;
The blind eyes brighten; yield and yearn
Our hungering hearts; from alien shores
The lost wave of the spirit pours
Homeward, in passionate penitence,
To the dear breast of Being, whence
Our children's children re-arise,
And seek you, with the self-same eyes.

INTERCHANGE

If, reborn, you return
  To the earth as a boy,
As a girl will I come,
  To renew the old joy.

Oh, the eager boy-face,
  The dear eyes, not unknown—
The sweet opposite strength
  That makes war on my own!

What grace will I give you,
  What bounteousness,
And all the kind joy
  And the love I possess—

In the spring, in the spring,
  When the hawthorn is white,
In the midsummer night,
  In the silence of night—

As you give me them now:
  Though the lips be above,
Or the lips be below,
  They shall greet you with love!

But if as a girl
  You return to the earth,
As a boy will I pass
  Through the portals of birth—

Still ever to be,
  Through all cycles of breath,
Through the blind revolutions
  Of life and of death,

Your opposite ever,
  Your fate and dear foe,
Though the lips be above,
  Or the lips be below.

LONELINESS

Lonely the heart is, though from east to west
It flee the phantom following without rest:
  Loneliness lurks amid the laughing crowd;
  A loneliness deeper than solitude,
Deep loneliness, at the belovèd breast.

ALL THE MORE

Alas, dear love, how humbled sinks your head
  Before the beauty of the starry choir,
How suddenly is all your beauty fled
  Before the morning and the radiant fire.

Pitiful are you, to the dusty doom
  Condemned—and to the sorrowful embrace
Your body hastens mournfully, the tomb
  Shall swallow up the sadness of your face.

The breathless awe of heaven, the white sleep
  Of star on star, make you ridiculous;
Our love, before the Love that thrills the Deep,
  Fades, and the fiery wheels roll over us—

The holy, implacable wheels of all things, moving
  Mercilessly forever. All the more,
Dearly belovèd, sorrowful and loving
  I seek your bosom, with the world at war.

O sad and mortal! O most dear desire,
  Holy and human, with the doom at strife!
Beneath the beauty of the starry choir
  I bow before you, at the throne of life.

THE POET

To the human, the Supreme
Poet speaks, in wind and stream—
Tenderly He would express
His meaning, in all loveliness.

Simply does He speak, and clear,
As man to man, His message dear—
Aye, and well enough He knows
Who shall understand His rose.

Nor humblest, nor most exquisite
Detail or phrase does He omit
From the great poem, confident
It shall be noted what He meant.

And cunningly doth still devise
New Aprils for His poet's eyes,
For whose joy all things were wrought
That, without him, were as nought.

Holy Poet, I have heard
Thy lost music, Thy least word;
Of Thy song no tiniest part
Has escaped this listening heart.

But for lonely men like me
It were wasted utterly,
All this beauty—vainly spent—
Unavailing lavishment.

For the world, enough it were
To have a useful earth, and bare;
But, for poets, it is made
All in loveliness arrayed.

For his eye, the little moth
Wears her coat of colored cloth,
And, to please his ear, the deep
Ocean murmurs in her sleep.

Rustle gently in the breeze,
For his delight, the poplar trees,
And above his happy head
The fable of the stars is spread.

LOVE

Love, even as he conquers us,
  Love, that is master of all the years—
Bending in beauty over us,
  Laughs as the lovely moment nears.

For every joy he despoils us of,
  In the ecstasy and most bitter bliss,
And every cry that is wrung from us,
  Confessing us still more wholly his—

Oh, wholly his, and more and more,
  His in the end, and his alone!
Oh, and to feel the very soul
  Bared to his beauty, and overthrown—

The pitiless and the insatiate lips,
  And the kind heart that bends from above,
And the wide eyes, through brimming tears,
  Laugh, for exultant love.

OASIS

In terror and in longing,
  I searched from east to west—
But ere my lips had spoken,
  The belovèd heart had guessed.

Under the tree of life
  She lured my heart aside—
Ere my lips had spoken,
  Silently she replied.

I leaned to her body's beauty,
  The tender loveliness—
Ere my lips had spoken,
  Her beauty whispered "yes."

PRAYER

O love, now my life, to yours, in the moment of its greatest need,
  Turns for the supreme compassion and all my senses pray
To your triumphant loveliness, be great indeed,
  And gracious, as befits a conqueror—turn not my love away!

But, in the holy midnight of your tresses, hide
  My hunted soul from the arrows of your face; oh, let me lie
Close, close, at your breast—and, against the solemn pride
  Of your victorious heart, hold close this heart that at your own
    must die!

It faints for the land of your far beauty—oh, let it break
  On the implacable silence of your bosom here;
Have pity on your lover, lay your arms about me for dear pity's
    sake—
  Yet have no pity: pain itself, from you, is dear.

Hold me—oh, hold me close, that in the great moment I may
    know
  Your re-assuring heart and breast that in the divine rhythm
    move!
Be merciful as a victor to the vanquished in the hour of his
    overthrow—
  Merciful as death, and inexorable as love.

I THOUGHT OF YOU

I thought of you when in the pallid dawn
  Glimmered day's loveliest and loneliest star,
Infinitely in the pale blue withdrawn,
  Touching my heart with beauty from afar—
Where, bending with her blossom, the white spray,
  After the passing of a sudden shower,
Trembled all dewy in the wind of May,
  I thought of your white loveliness in flower.

And once, in the deep wonder of a dream,
You came to me, and your clear face was bowed
Over my face, like light on a dark stream,
And your soft hair fell round me, like a cloud—
And then I woke; but still, when you were gone,
Like music, in my heart you lingered on.

FLOWERING

The dear and belovèd beauty,
Persuasive as the spring,
Lures life from the heart of life,
Song from the lips that sing.

As roses in a garden
Kissed by the laughing south,
Life, long numb at the heart,
And song, long dumb at the mouth,

Bud, and break into blossom,
And quicken with sweet unrest—
Are born, and shed, and wasted,
At the belovèd breast.

AVOWAL

'Tis not your darling loveliness alone
That draws me, the proud splendor of your face,
Beautiful as a conqueror's on his throne,
Or a swift runner's, eager for the race—
Not that carved throat, that chalice of sweet sound,
Nor eyes that are the heavens of my prayer,
Pale, perfect brows, from many a conquest crowned
Victorious, nor the halo of your hair.

These the dull crowd gape after, little they
  Guess the still lovelier being, hid from view,
The pilgrim in this prison-house of clay,
  Which is yourself, the very soul of you—
    Whose banner love here flings to heaven unfurled,
    And bares his shining sword to all the world.

DESIRE

Better than another's pity
  Drowsing the heart like dew,
Pain, and the tumult of pain is,
  So that it come from you.

Pity is old and feeble,
  Pity has a mournful tongue—
But oh, delight is cruel,
  Delight is well and young.

Oh, better than another's pity,
  Better than peace or rest,
One starlit hour of longing
  And weariness, at your breast—

At the wild, sweet arch of your bosom,
  Where the young blood laughs and sings—
Panting with dear desire,
  And pitiless as the spring's.

EXULTATION

Before the dawn the very thought of you,
That wakes me, as the morning wakes the night,
Floods all my heart with most exultant joy.

The thought of you, that rises with the stars
When evening wheels all glittering through the dark,
Floods all my heart with most exultant joy.

O life and joy and breath and death of me,
With every breath I draw you in like air—
Oh, I shall die of you, of you, of you!

O love, I love you better than you know—
I love you as the water loves the sea,
I love you as the twilight loves the dark.

The trumpets of the morning, to my heart,
From shining towers, blow the thought of you—
The waves of evening flood my heart with you.

O life and joy and breath and death of me,
With every breath I draw you in like air—
Oh, I shall die of you, of you, of you!

BE BORN AGAIN!

Come, heart—to be possessed,
Recklessly hasten; at that lovelier breast
Give up, give over, take
The death of selfhood, and for beauty's sake
The immortal venture make.
Heart, let us dare.
See, is it not sweet, is it not fair,
And worthy of your pain?
Heart, die again—
Die now, and for one shuddering moment live
In the dear being, be
You herself utterly—
So, from this breast you shall be born again.
Heart, give—give!

POSSESSION

The call of a bird, from the woodland;
  In my body a slow, sweet pain:
Oh, my body is full of you
  As the earth of the April rain.

To the call of the bird in the woodland,
  Answers a voice in my heart—
Up through my aching pulses
  Your pulses tremble and start.

Oh, would I were yours again wholly,
  Flooded again and again
With yourself, that am grown already
  So full of that slow, sweet pain!

Oh, would I were yours again wholly,
  And all my sorrow again
Lay bared—my pain, to your beauty—
  As the earth to the April rain!

SLEEP

The shoreless and the starless sea of night
  With solemn tide of radiant moonlight flows,
  And pouring through the lattice-window, throws
Upon your bosom chequered shade and light—
Like a cathedral, bathed in gloom, or bright
  With sumptuous splendor, now your body shows,
  In the stern marble of serene repose,
Where reigned the sovereign and supreme delight.

Hushed is your bosom's choir, and deep rest
  Broods on the altar; empty is the throne
And silent is the answer in your breast,

That but so lately echoed to my own—
Where are you fled from me, on what far quest,
In mute disdain, leaving me here alone?

FULFILLMENT

Oh, all your woman's beauty,
Bowed down like a laden bough
Heavy with its burden of beauty,
Has drooped across me now!

Oh, the whole spirit of springtime
Has caught me in embrace;
April and April's kindness
Have bowed across my face!

Oh, the world is full of bounty
And the springtime's starry breath!
Love has conquered life,
And life has conquered death.

THE WAVE

As the still moon without stir
Draws the waters after her,
The sad robe of all the sea,
Silently thou drawest me.

As the billows on the shore,
To be broken and give o'er,
Dash themselves in dying spray,
So I give myself away.

Lethe soft, ah, sweet surcease—
Not the wave may be at peace
Till it shatter, nor love rest
Save at the belovèd breast.

THERE IS NO WORD

Who shall lay bare love's very secret, who
  Reveal the sovereign splendor on its throne,
  Or utter forth in language the unknown—
Old is all language, but all love is new!
How may I tell you of this love that to
  Your bosom draws me from my very own,
  And wakes me to one need, and one alone—
O love, the need to be reborn from you!

There is no word whereby love may declare
  His holy will—but in the breathless deed
Of adoration, in the primal prayer
  At the belovèd breast, he tells his need
    To the one kind and conquering heart; and she,
    In love and pity, answers silently.

REST

Nightlong, full of bitter longing,
  Slumberless I tossed, and fain—
But the thought of you, at morning,
  Soothed away the touch of pain.

The warm April rain was falling,
  The first bird-notes woke again,
And the thought of you came falling
  Softly on my heart, like rain.

Till the rain kissed sleep aslumber,
  Till sleep kissed away my pain,
And I dreamed that I was lying
  At your very heart again.

SONG AT NIGHT

Under your window, deep in the heart of the night,
  Something is crying under the starry sky,
Between the going night and the coming light—
  It is I, it is I.

Under your window cries without quiet or rest,
  Something that cries, with the desolate winds that cry,
For the you that sleeps deep in the heart of your breast—
  It is I, it is I.

MARCH MORNING

Like soft veil by veil dividing,
  Now soft snow by snow divides,
Falling gently, and leaves naked
  The spring's beauty, like a bride's.

Clear and cold her wet limbs sparkle
  In the woodland drenched with dew
And warm showers; at the window,
  Windy buds and boughs shine through—

And a bird-note from the tree-tops,
  Through my heart, here in the dawn,
Strikes—like a bright blade of beauty
  Driven, like a blade withdrawn.

LONGING

To love you, and die, sweet—that were the best:
To drink of you once nor 'waken again
To aught unkinder, but happily slain—
No more longing and no more pain—

With love at its fullest and life at its best,
To sink into rest,
To sink into sleep from the heaven of your breast—
That were the best.

Ah, to sink from the noon-tide of love, when the noon
Lies heavy on life, and the earth in the swoon
Of the bride-sleep is hushed, when the shadowless hour
Broods perfect and prone on the world, and each flower
To the core with perfection's fulfillment is thrilled,
And the birds in the woodland, for rapture, are stilled—
Beauty and longing and sorrow fulfilled—
Oh, drunkenly, wearily, blessedly slain:
Yours at last, yours at last, to sink into rest,
Yours at last, yours at last, from the heaven of your breast
To sink into rest—
No more longing and no more pain,
And no more pain.

IT IS YOUR LOVE

It is your love, and not the radiant light,
  That fills the lonely and the sunset lands
When evening over the broad and billowing waste
  Hallows the silences, with hovering hands.

When westward, o'er worn sunset's wrath, the void
  Widens with luminous rapture, calm and bright—
O most serene and liberating soul,
  Your spirit widens there with vast delight!

In the huge agony of the sunset's waste
  Your burning love is sacrificed and slain;
Your being re-arises in the east,
  Crowning with starry peace the close of pain.

Even as the sunrise from her single self
  Frees the last star, lost in his light above,
So from myself you liberate myself,
  Lost in the widening daylight of your love.

THE BELOVÈD

Oh, the one face most belovèd,
  Aureoled 'mid a million faces;
The one breast that bears the secret,
  'Mid creation's myriad races;

Known by heart, the one dear body—
  The dear lips, well worn, well known!
Faithful to one life forever,
  Loyal to one self alone,

Still Love bears upon his bosom,
  Toward the stars, with every breath,
The dear burden of that beauty,
  His at last in life and death—

Under sun and moon and starlight
  Lifting upward sleeplessly,
Lapsing in long lines of sorrow,
  Like the bosom of the sea—

With exhaustion most exalted
  And new longing newly born,
With seraphic pain triumphant,
  And high weariness outworn.

WEARINESS IN SPRING

All love-songs, and the inner sense
  Of every song and singing word,
Are consummated in the cry
  Of any woodland bird.

Alas for the blind pain of speech,
And all the strife to comprehend:
The cry of any woodland bird
Has said it all, in the end.

ZENITH

Now in my breast the sole and sovereign power
Puts forth its strength, and through a million veins
I feel the tidal stream of life that strains
Toward the dark sea that doth all streams devour:
This is the noontide of my spirit's hour,
Through all my frame the imperious rhythm reigns—
And the one self, that deep in me sustains
His being, stands fulfilled in fullest flower.

Now through my brain the blood's rich purple roars,
Washing her cells with wine of song and dream,
And in my breast the embattled fury wars
On the dark foe, and rages for extreme
Wrath and delight—and all my being pours,
Through love and song, toward the escape supreme.

RETURN AFTER DEATH

To the old home,
Over the meadow-lands, by lonely night,
Lo, I am come—
Drawn are the blinds, quenched is the friendly light

And dark the door:
The crickets chirp and the cicadas sing,
But nevermore
Comes the quick step, the dear voice answering.

Long though I knock,
Never the eager answer comes; they will
Never unlock—
So hushed the night, so deep and starry-still.

Ah, fain, how fain—
From the blind terror and the loneliness,
Anguish insane,
And dreadful secret that you may not guess—

With what desire,
Ah, with what longing that you cannot know,
To the warm fire,
The cosy hearth, and faces all aglow,

Dear eyes that burn,
The old familiar jokes and questions dear,
We lost return,
Calling with voices that you cannot hear.

Night, deep and still—
Empty, into the dark the windows stare;
A whip-poor-will
Cries, like the past, upon the patient air.

But where it lies—
The thing I was, the shell of me—they kneel,
With yearning eyes,
And to mute heaven lift their vain appeal.

Here, on the shore
And coast of the illimitable night,
Forevermore
Lies the lost shell and home of my delight—

Where passion reigned,
Where ecstasy drew hushed and hurried breath,
Where love disdained
To stain her triumph with the thought of death.

Oh, pang too sheer,
Of all that has been and may never be—
Anguish austere,
And wild regret of all eternity!

THE DEAD POET

New mornings flood the world; starred nights wheel over;
But he is mute: defeated in the war
That virgin beauty wages on her lover,
He takes his rest, nor heeds them evermore.

ESCAPE

Into bright forms the formless Being flows,
Seeking therein its rapture and repose;
But still the forms subside, and re-arise
New forms: body is born, and body dies.
Then, in my body's cage, I murmured, "How
Shall I escape from this destruction now,
This travail all in vain?"
Answered my love, "Escape, through love, to me,
Who am the road to immortality;"
And answered holy Art,
"Fashion a deathless form, where you, apart,
In lonely immortality may reign—
Hasten, and from this fading form depart."

VANISHED

He is not here, your most belovèd one:
With everlasting gesture he has cast
His garments from him, and in splendor passed
Out of the sign and circle of the sun—

He is not with us; he has dared and done
The great adventure, and this frame at last
Lies, like a shell outworn, here on the vast
Margin and shore of all oblivion.

There is not any motion in the breast,
Where the quick wave of being came and went;
The bosom thrills not now, to be caressed,
Nor will the cold lips deign to give consent.
See—he is vanished, and the careless guest
Has left his mansion to the element.

EXILE FROM GOD

I do not fear to lay my body down
In death, to share
The life of the dark earth, and lose my own—
If God be there.

I have so loved all sense of Him—sweet might
Of color and sound,
His tangible loveliness and living light
That robe me round.

If to His heart, in the hushed grave and dim,
We sink more near,
It shall be well: living, we rest in Him.
Only I fear

Lest from my God in lonely death I lapse,
And the dumb clod
Lose Him; for God is life, and death perhaps
Exile from God.

And the roof parted, and in silence we
Through the cool air of quiet evening rose:
I saw the earth beneath me in repose
Glimmering darkly, fields once loved so well,
The little lonely house, and the worn shell
Of my old body on the bed, and one
That knelt beside it, with bowed head, alone.
Not without grief, ah, not without regret,
Was made that mighty sundering! And yet,
Over my head, the immemorial ways
Of heaven lured me on, the trackless maze
And wilderness of God, sublime and wild;
Then to me turned that face, "O foolish child,
Where would you seek to? To what loveliness
And dimmest throne of heaven though you press,
What sanctuary of remotest flame,
You shall but find a world of dust, the same
World of old griefs; whither your spirit flow,
But the same world of sorrows left below—
Where shall you flee from the old face of death,
Or face of love? No light that quivereth
In heaven's holiest, in serene disdain,
But is a world of passion and of pain
Even as ours." And I cried again,
"But somewhere, surely, God has His abode!
Then, to that star which is the throne of God—
His very seat—oh, thither let us first
Stream in fierce love and longing, for I thirst,
Deeply I thirst with deep desire of God."
And an unbroken silence reigned abroad
Where died those words, where silently was turned
That face toward mine beseeching it, and burned,
Deep in those eyes compassionate and supreme,
Inexorable truth: "Child, child, what dream,

What hopeless hope is here! Where shall you find
This phantom and chimera of the mind,
Reared for your refuge—you, that for your rest,
Have fashioned God, and given Him a breast
For pain to lean on, and a heart for love!
Though from heaven's deeps to heaven's heights above
You seek Him, though through all eternity
You send your soul out, in one loneliest cry,
No voice shall answer, nor no tongue declare
The Presence that is all things everywhere—
The flying Dream." Then on my spirit fell
That bolt of truth, like lightning terrible
In fiery beauty—and I whispered low,
"Even as you will, do with me even so."

Midway in heaven we paused—was lifted up
Now, to my faltering lips, a drowsy cup
Upon whose cold, clear brim, as on the brink
Of nothingness, shuddered my lips, and "Drink,"
Cried a low voice, "deep, of this draught divine,
Oblivion, the world's consoling wine,
Wine of all tears and sorrows and soft sleep—
Nirvana, great and blessèd; deep, deep
Drink, and, in holy love, triumphantly
Render your self unto the All, and be
In other selves your immortality.
Amen. Amen." What mastery forsook
This soul, unkingdomed then! What terror shook
This core of being, to its shrillest cry:
"This lonely self, this bitter self, this I,
This self, this self, and not oblivion,
This only, this forever, this alone,
This, and no other—!" So my being's wave
Broke on fate's shore, in agony. But grave
Were the calm eyes that searched me, and austere
The awful voice that answered, "Shall you fear

To render up what all have loved and lost?
Would you through timeless time, a lonely ghost,
In solitary selfishness apart,
Wander the heavens, from the eternal heart
Of life an exile? Shall you dread to move
Into the blood and breast of all you love,
In gracious self-surrender—shrink to take
The cup, supreme and bitter, for the sake
Of life to come, nor generously give
Your self up, in the self of all that live—
Lovelier beings in some worthier shape?
Would you alone the common doom escape
Of all those silent millions that did bear
Their part in death, and suffered it—nor share
The general lot of all men born to be,
And the high sacrament universal? See,
On all these myriad thrones of life, there shall
No life escape the destiny tragical,
And doom triumphant. See, the summer's rose,
That to the sun her sovereign beauty shows,
Lets fall into the dust her crimson leaves;
The shifting swallow, that in heaven weaves
His arrowy flight, ceaselessly hurries by
Into the mystery, nor questions why
In his brief heart; and in the ringing wood
Those songs most musical are soon subdued
To the great peace; while all things gay and dear,
Springtime and April of the flowering year,
In generous self-abandonment consent
To the sublime and dark accomplishment
Of life's divine renewals: loveliness,
On death's divide, in a supreme caress,
Shatters her beauty, like a moonlit wave.
Yes, the one body dear, and bounty brave,
The lips of life, full of all sweet replies,
That had the breath of springtime in their sighs—

That held the immortal boon, the very breast,
Framed for all joys, and born to be caressed,
In stately splendor through the gathering gloom
Moves, without murmur, and accepts the doom—
Ah, even this, the most belovèd, too.
Now, in this thought, perish the thought of you,
And, in the wonder and the dream thereof,
Cease—and be one at last with all you love."

Then toward those eyes, pleading I turned, and saw
Pity inexorable, eternal awe;
And on the starry All that round me moved
I looked, and on the universe I loved—
And, to the dregs, that cup of hopes and fears
I drained, with fiery laughter and wild tears.

HOLY LIGHT

Life, where your lone candle burns
  In the darkness of the night,
Mothlike my lost spirit turns
  Toward you, in its circling flight.

Luringly your beauty draws
  Onward, with each shuddering breath—
Till I flutter, till I pause
  In the radiance of death.

I am flaming, I am fled—
  All around you reigns the night;
But my agony has fed
  You, a moment, holy light.

THE BLACK PANTHER

(1922)

TO MY SISTER
EMILY WHEELOCK FAIRFAX

THE BLACK PANTHER

There is a panther caged within my breast,
  But what his name, there is no breast shall know
  Save mine, nor what it is that drives him so,
Backward and forward, in relentless quest—
That silent rage, baffled but unsuppressed,
  The soft pad of those stealthy feet that go
  Over my body's prison to and fro,
Trying the walls forever, without rest.

All day I feed him with my living heart,
  But when the night puts forth her dreams and stars,
    The inexorable frenzy re-awakes:
  His wrath is hurled upon the trembling bars,
The eternal passion stretches me apart,
    And I lie silent—but my body shakes.

NIGHT HAS ITS FEAR

  Night has its fear—
As the slow dusk advances, and the day
Fades out in fire along the starry way,
  The ancient doubt draws near.

  Vague shapes of dread,
Soft owl or moth, and timid, twittering things,
Move through the growing dark; on furtive wings
  The bat flits overhead.

  And in the house
The death-watch ticks; the dust of time is stirred
With timorous footfalls, in the night is heard
  The gnawing of the mouse.

Through the old room
What phantoms throng, what ghosts that to and fro
Waver—and lips that laughed here long ago,
Gone back into the gloom!

A whip-poor-will
Bleakly across the baleful country cries
From a blurred mouth, and from the west replies
Echo—and all is still.

Now, from her shell,
Her body's prison, with the ancient doubt
And terror stricken, the scared soul looks out,
Asking if all be well.

Great kings have been,
Poets, and mighty prophets; shapes have cried
About the world, or moved in mournful pride,
And are no longer seen.

From many lands
Their plaint was lifted; from how many a shore
Sorrows have wailed, that are not any more!
They sleep, with folded hands.

They have their day:
Their cry is loud about the earth, who come
To the one end—the singing lips grow dumb
Always, in the one way.

Pondering these,
The fretful spirit, in bewilderment,
Quickens with a vague doubt, and, not content,
Broods—and is ill at ease.

Her being is
Throned on so frail a pulse, such fleeting breath
Bears up her dream across the gulf of death
And the obscure abyss.

Always she hears
The hurtling chariots of the hurrying blood,
Her shuttling breath that in the solitude
Weaves the one self she wears.

Now first the vast
Veil over heaven is rent, and bares the whole
Shining reality—whereat the soul
Sickens, and is aghast.

Darkness reveals
The tragic truth: her will sinks hopeless wings
Before the inexorable fact of things,
Humbling the dread she feels.

With the old awes
Confronted, and the flaming mystery,
She may not speak—but pondering, suddenly
Grows silent, and withdraws.

She may not bear
That sight: the spangled heavens, from east to west,
Stretch out too wide the confines of the breast,
Straining in wonder there.

Her thoughts ascend,
Star beyond star, height beyond aching height
Upward, in adoration infinite,
Forever, without end.

So *shall* it be,
Till Time dim the high legend, till the throne
Of night be shaken, and the fate be known
Beyond eternity—

Till God divide
And rend asunder the embroidered hem
Of darkness, till the starry diadem
And crown be set aside.

THE SORROWFUL MASQUERADE

Even as to a music stately and sad,
The young girl's feet begin to move in a dance,
And curiously, for joy, shift and advance,
So, to a mournful waltz, somber and sweet,
All laughing things move with delighted feet—
So all things that draw light and laughing breath
Move, to the mournful waltz of life and death.

OCTOBER MOONLIGHT

Heaven is like an empty room to-night—
From rim to chilly rim
Wells the clear radiance of the cold moonlight,
And the earth-ways are dim.

Who has departed from this perfect place—
What fiery one here set
His throne in splendor, whom, vanished now, the face
Of heaven remembers yet!

Emptiness, emptiness—the skies are bare,
And the stark earth no less
Grows vacant as a memory: everywhere
Sleeps the cold loveliness.

Old is the earth—too old; her voice is shrill
Against the end of things,
To the inevitable her bitter will
Grows humbler as she sings.

Now from my breast the very soul takes flight,
Leaving its chambers bare
Of all save lonely memory and moonlight—
And song is silent there.

BURLESQUE SHOW

When, to a cheap and tawdry tune, the orchestra cried out,
Frantic, in violent syncopation, and began
Your queenly, imperial body in mournful grace to move about
Through the old devious motions, the device of man,

How suddenly then, silent magnificence, you put to shame
The crowded and garish theatre, the strangled cries
Of flute and trumpet—O mortal body, bearer of our flame
Through the drear lands of death, flower of the eternities!

Revered, reviled, wept and adored, beseeched, cried out upon
By ravening lips of the ages—the sacred source of things,
That glimmered in Thrace, that shone in Rome, that swayed in Babylon,
Here moves to the vile throb of castanets and strings.

Oh, through what generations have you lured, what secret ways,
Man's fainting heart to be reborn—what splendors move
Deep in his breast when, dolorous, your reluctant beauty sways
In the old weary rhythms of eternal love!

THE SECRET ONE

Here—by this frame and network of the flesh,
And wires of her control,
Surrounded—central, in her subtle mesh,
And secret, sits the soul,

Urgent through all the body, while each part
Obeys, and all are one—
While in her dungeons labors the lone heart
To make her will be done.

She reins the forces, in their wild career,
That bear her, as they go,
Over the dark abyss—and knows how sheer
Reaches the gulf below.

How dubious her life, and slenderly,
Hangs, by a scarlet thread,
Between eternity and eternity—
She guesses, wise in dread;

And ever watchful, ever wary, set
In the center all alone,
Feels round her, cautiously, if any threat
Be made against the throne.

Sometimes along her nerves the voice of pain
Bears tidings, to her hate
And frantic fear, that the old foe again
Is clamorous at the gate—

She rages up and down, and to and fro
In timid anger runs:
If the frontiers be menaced, it is known
All over, and at once.

She hears her breast of sorrows, night and day,
  At labor; round her brood
The old oblivions, where she sits at bay;
  She hears the battling blood.

Echoes assail her, from far worlds that lie
  Beyond the bourne of these—
Contact and color and the angry cry
  Of the realities

Beat on the brain forever; the high dream,
  By stratagem of speech,
Enters her portals, where she sits supreme
  And silent, pondering each—

Weighing and challenging, for weal or woe,
  All rumors; sending out
The emissaries of her will, that go
  To the frontiers about.

But most she loves the hour that beauty brings,
  Of rapture, and release
From the crude hunger and the cry of things,
  The hour of her peace—

When, by the inner light that floods her cell,
  The spirit, even as here,
Travails, in secrecy and joy, to tell
  Her passion and her fear.

Now, to the listening soul in you who read
  These lines, she tells it all,
How dear her day, how dark shall be, indeed,
  The hour when night must fall.

DREAM AND REALITY

Less than it is we would the truth should seem:
  Holy and marvellous the actual is—
  But stern her lips, and bitter is her kiss
Upon the brows of dream.

BLIND PLAYERS

Day breaks, and the old drama
  Repeats itself anew:
The hind wakes to be hunted,
  The huntsman to pursue—

The lover and the belovèd,
  Each one doomed to his part,
The victor and the vanquished,
  The hushed and the hurrying heart.

In terror and in triumph
  They play it through again,
The old unchanging drama
  Of passion and of pain,

As the great will has willed it,
  That, in all forms being cast,
Wars on itself forever.
  Oh, may they at the last—

The falcon, and the fledgling
  He stoops to from the sky,
The lips that are so eager,
  The lips that would deny—

When the old war is ended,
  When the stern will is done,
Meet in eternal pity,
  And know themselves as one.

Heaven at last
Is bared, and the whole world one radiant room—
Black are the shadows, in great pools of gloom,
By copse and thicket cast.

The cattle browse
With sound of gentle breathing, and their breath
Is mild in glimmering meadows, or beneath
Drooped branches where they drowse;

While, 'mid the chill
Shadows, and cold, clear moonlight all about,
A single bat goes dipping in and out
Softly, and all is still.

Silence around,
Save for a cricket! Lapped in slumbrous peace
Lie hill and meadowland—the shining seas
Lap on them, without sound.

It is earth's cry,
Lifted in adoration: the old dream,
Beauty, is with her—and her hour supreme,
That goes so swiftly by.

Too well she knows
The sweet illusion, from no earthly shore
Visitant—the bright word that evermore
Troubles her dark repose.

Her heart lies bare—
Drunken, drunken, she lifts a dreamy breast;
Hour by hour, in rapture and unrest
Flows the unending prayer.

The path of night
Reaches from rim to rim, a radiant road,
Whereon the exalted beauty walks abroad
In wonder and wild light.

Upon what eyes,
Lifted in homesickness, now falls again
The loveliness that haunts the world with pain—
Light out of paradise!

TCHAIKOVSKY: FIFTH SYMPHONY

My heart cried out in wonder: Can it be,
The form, from which this thrilling passion flows
On tides of beauty and eternal tone,
Audibly now before the very sense
Of thronging thousands, somewhere in the clay
Of Russia lies, with folded hands—relapsed
Into the formless?

And my mind replied:
The longing, that so labors for release,
Not wholly in that transient form was trapped
Wherein we perish miserably here,
But has escaped into the form supreme,
A deathless body—and now walks abroad
Among the generations of mankind,
Trailing the robes of the immortal woe.

And still that music poured. O sacred heart,
And secret—wellhead of those streams of song—
Are you content! How is it with you now,
O breast whose sorrows overflowed the world?

MIRROR

On the wide sea of sleep
  I launch my gliding boat—
Over the rhythmic deep,
  On flowing tides, I float.

The curving shore around
  Fades in the pale starlight,
A slumbering, sleepy sound
  Goes drifting through the night.

It is the music of dreams,
  Along the horizon blown—
It stirs the glimmering streams,
  Where the pale stars lie strown.

The stars shine in the deep,
  Reflected from afar;
My eyes tremble with sleep,
  Reflecting sea and star.

My eyes look up at me,
  Out of the mirrored eyes,
And in their depths I see,
  Mirrored, the stars and skies.

Around, around, around,
  My boat whirls with the stream;
I feel a dizzy sound
  Around me, like a dream.

Where may I moor my bark?
  How may I lift my head?
What is that silence? Hark,
  The sound of dreams is fled!

The breath of slumber lies,
  Like perfume, on the deep—
Night with a thousand eyes
  Stares at herself in sleep.

THE POET TELLS OF HIS LOVE

How shall I sing of her, that is
  My life's long rapture and despair—
Sorrow eternal, loveliness,
  To whom each heart-beat is a prayer!

Utterly, endlessly, alone
  Possessing me, yet unpossessed—
The dark, the drear belovèd one
  That takes the tribute of this breast.

Dæmon disconsolate—in vain,
  In vain petitioned and implored,
How many a midnight of disdain
  Darkly and dreadfully adored!

Beauty, the virgin, evermore
  Out of these arms with laughter fled,
Vanished—a voice by slope and shore
  Haunting the world, illusion dread.

Most secret siren, on whose coast,
  'Mid spray of perishing song, are hurled
All desolate lovers, all the lost
  Souls, and half-poets of the world.

Through sleepless nights and lonely days,
  In tears and terror served and sought—
Light beyond light, the supreme face
  That blinds the adoring eyes of thought.

How shall I sing of her! Nay, all—
All song, all sorrow, all silence of
This desperate heart, that is her thrall,
Trembles and tries to tell my love.

IN THE DARK CITY

There is a harper plays
Through the long watches of the lonely night
When, like a cemetery,
Sleeps the dark city with her millions lying each in his tomb.
I feel it in my dream, but when I wake—
Suddenly, like some secret thing not to be overheard,
It ceases,
And the gray night grows dumb. Only in memory
Linger those veiled adagios, fading, fading . . .
Till, with the morning, they are lost.

What door was opened then?
What worlds, undreamed of, lie around us in our sleep,
That yet we may not know?
Where is it one sat playing
Over and over, with such high and dreadful peace,
The passion and sorrow of the eternal doom?

IMMENSITY

At noon I watched
In the large hollow of eternal heaven
A soaring hawk climb slowly toward the sun
Through gyres of adoration without end.
His flight was a great prayer. . . .

SEA-HORIZONS

The sorrowful expanse from heaven to heaven,
From zone to zone, from deep to height above,
The mute arch of the everlasting heaven,
Bends over me with Your unwearied love.

Immeasurable, unutterable, and soundless—
  Wide as the east from the west Your love is wide;
The unfathomable distances are boundless
  Infinite tenderness on every side.

Against the dark strength of Your huge endurance
  My little being beats her baffled wings,
Lifts her shrill voice, and wounds the calm assurance
  And tenderness of Your large evenings.

In the vast robes of Your serene compassion
  She hides her soiled and burning face of shame—
Your solemn and inexorable passion
  Lifts her blurred eyes to meet Your glance of flame.

As bread that for my daily fare is broken,
  The eternal loveliness before me spread—
Unutterable gesture, word unspoken,
  In the proud silences forever said.

The sun puts forth his strength, the reaches shimmer
  With inarticulate rapture, and the proud
Waters are thrilled; the fields of ocean glimmer
  With shifting light and overshadowing cloud.

Noon upon noon in heaven takes up his station,
  Day follows night, and night gives place to day—
Your infinite and lonely meditation
  Sinks, with the sunset, down the starry way.

Veiled is the vast: the heaven of evening, burning,
  Reveals, on the large waters of the sea,
Hopelessness, hopelessness—the patient yearning
  And dumb caress of the immensity.

Sorrowful is the mighty heart that reaches
  Around this brief and scornful heart of mine—
The dim curve of the melancholy beaches,
  And vacancies along the lone sea-line.

In the huge longing of the far sea-spaces,
  The tremulous rim about the waters curled,
Waits the eternal Gentleness, and traces
  His sad horizons round the fading world.

Cloud beyond cloud, the arch of heaven goes over;
  Steep beyond steep, the patient skies descend:
The illimitable wastes and waves discover
  Loneliness—loneliness without an end.

Inexorable Compassion, may I never
  Reach the last verge and limits of Your love?
Beyond me, still beyond me melt forever
  The eternal margins, fading as I move.

OF DAY CAME NIGHT

We lay by the sea, and knew
  Darkness must make us one—
Heaven was thrilled clean through
  By the trumpets of the sun,
The sea burned gold and blue.

The sand, in the pale heat,
  Was parched as desert sand—
Your wrist, where the veins meet,
  The cool veins of your hand,
Made thirst seem bitter-sweet.

Never a word was said,
  Of what must be so soon;
In longing and in dread
  The golden afternoon
Burned down, till dusk was shed.

It was not hope, nor fear,
  Yet something of them both,
That held us trembling here,
  Half eager and half loath
For darkness, dread but dear.

Few were the words were spoken,
  But in each other's eyes
We read the certain token
  That sealed our destinies—
Our wings of pride were broken.

So, while the waters paled
  Around us, and the west
Fainted, our hearts that failed,
  In silence were confessed—
Silence at last prevailed.

And now up her clear stair
  The evening-star began
To climb, where heaven was bare
  A homing fish-hawk ran
Down avenues of air.

Night swallowed up the sun,
  And darkness, like a hood,
Sank, and the sea breathed on—
  In silence and solitude
The eternal will was done.

PILGRIM

The cold wind cries across the rolling dunes,
  The gray sails fleck the margins of the world—
I watch the rolling dunes along the barren sky,
  And wan, white waters by the swift wind hurled.

Oh, where are Queen Faustina, and Babylon, and Tyre,
  And pale Troy, lost in a silver mist of tears—
And I, O earth, your child, more old than all these others,
  What have you done to me, these many thousand years?

THE FISH-HAWK

On the large highway of the awful air that flows
  Unbounded between sea and heaven, while twilight screened
The sorrowful distances, he moved and had repose;
  On the huge wind of the immensity he leaned
His steady body, in long lapse of flight—and rose

Gradual, through broad gyres of ever-climbing rest,
  Up the clear stair of the eternal sky, and stood
Throned on the summit! Slowly, with his widening breast,
  Widened around him the enormous solitude,
From the gray rim of ocean to the glowing west.

Headlands and capes forlorn, of the far coast, the land
  Rolling her barrens toward the south, he, from his throne
Upon the gigantic wind, beheld: he hung, he fanned
  The abyss, for mighty joy, to feel beneath him strown
Pale pastures of the sea, with heaven on either hand—

The world, with all her winds and waters, earth and air,
  Fields, folds, and moving clouds. The awful and adored
Arches and endless aisles of vacancy, the fair
  Void of sheer heights and hollows hailed him as her lord
And lover in the highest, to whom all heaven lay bare.

Till from that tower of ecstasy, that baffled height,
  Stooping, he sank; and slowly on the world's wide way
Walked, with great wing on wing, the merciless, proud Might,
  Hunting the huddled and lone reaches for his prey,
Down the dim shore—and faded in the crumbling light.

Slowly the dusk covered the land. Like a great hymn
  The sound of moving winds and waters was; the sea
Whispered a benediction, and the west grew dim
  Where evening lifted her clear candles quietly . . .
Heaven, crowded with stars, trembled from rim to rim.

DISDAINFUL BEAUTY

On the wide waste the web of twilight, trembling,
  Hangs low with stars and night—
The dying day, in the worn west dissembling,
  Crowns his defeat with light.

Here by the grave, gray sea my soul sinks, crying,
  By beauty stabbed to death—
"Oh, in the dusk of the world, let me, too, dying,
  Mix with all these my breath!"

There is no answer. In the cold heavens shining,
  Star trembles unto star—
The virgin moon in the clear west declining
  Hangs, like a scimitar.

MY LONELY ONE

Even as a hawk's in the large heaven's hollow
  Are the great ways, and gracious, of your love—
No lesser flight or wearier wing may follow
  In those broad gyres where you rest and move.

Most merciless, most high, most proud, most lonely—
In the clear space between the sky and sea
Wheel your huge orbits, where the sea-winds only
Wander the sun-roads of immensity.

Yet have I known your heart and, of what fashion,
Your love—how great, how hardly to be borne—
Your tenderness, too perfect for compassion,
Your divine strength, too pure and proud for scorn.

You are most beautiful, but it is given
How few to find you, fewer still to keep
Your high path through the solitude of heaven,
My lonely one—your watch upon the deep.

Now toward the gold glow of the sunset's splendor
Veer your great vans: what haven in the west
Now draws you, while the mellowing light makes tender
Your dripping plumes—what islands of the blest?

Lift me, oh, lift me up to you forever,
Beautiful Terror! Let your sacred might
Stoop to me here, and save—oh, let me never
Sink from you now, to share a lesser flight.

Even as I pray, my wings of longing fail me,
And my heart flags. In solitude you move
Down the night's shore: not praying shall avail me,
To lift me, fallen from your faultless love.

JOURNEY'S END

Forgive me, dear, if I have lost my way,
In coming home to you
Through storm and shadow of the gathering night—
If I did stray,
Still I was seeking, and I never knew
How near me burned the dear and friendly light.

Now, at your door, ere the great dark begin,
Alone I stand, and knock—
Say not it is too late that I have come.
Oh, take me in,
For I am yours! Darling, unlock, unlock—
All time, to this was but a journey home.

THE SILENCE

In the evening, in the quiet Park, we walked together,
After so many and after so many years—
We walked again in the evening, in the warm May weather,
After the partings and tears.

And under the splendor, under the starry skies,
We walked, without sound or sigh, in a calm unbroken,
As the dead walk together in a long-lost Paradise—
Silent, with no word spoken.

RETURN

What is this memory, this homesickness,
That draws me to yourself resistlessly,
As to some far place where I long to be—
This exile's hungering for loveliness?
Here in the night the face that I caress
Lures like a moonlit land beyond the sea,
A kingdom lost, toward which the heart of me,
Shipwrecked and worn, beats backward in distress.

Have I been here before? How long ago,
And on what pilgrimage and journey far,
Was lost this land remembered? By what star
Did I steer homeward? Only this I know,
That all my being from my breast would go
To the dear home and heaven where you are.

PARTING IN SPRING

We shall not live to see the light of June
  Together, you and I—
Ere the young moon, ere the young thrush's tune,
  Our love must die.

Even the kind stars of this month, that see
  Our love laid breast to breast,
O sweet, shall see your breast laid far from me
  As the east from the west.

IN THE SOLITUDE

Give me your pitiful, soft hand, and lay
  Your cheek against my shoulder, let your head
  Rest heavily, and your loose hair be shed
Where the heart breaks with what it cannot say—
Springtime is in the air, the winds of May
  Rustle the silken curtains, and are fled;
  Give me your hand—ah, let no word be said,
Let the great will of silence have its way.

You do not love me, and at last I know
  How far lies the lost land for which I pine—
    But in the lonely passion of my mood
I feel your pulses toward my pulses flow,
  And the dear blood that, through your hand, to mine,
    Whispers her pity in the solitude.

ANNE

Belovèd—O adorable and false—
Whom have you taken now in the dear toils?

By what pale margins do your footsteps stray,
Or what enchanted wood? What valleys hold
The lily of your loveliness? What hills
Have known your weight upon them, what far shores?

Twilight comes tenderly, while evening lifts
Along the pallid rim her lonely star—

Oh, happy heart on which your heart is laid!

BALLAD

I dreamed I passed a doorway
  Where, for a sign of death,
White ribbons one was binding
  About a flowery wreath.

What drew me so, I know not,
  But drawing near, I said,
"Kind sir, and can you tell me
  Who is it here lies dead?"

Said he, "Thy most belovèd
  Died here, this very day,
That had known twenty Aprils,
  Had she but lived till May."

Astonished, I made answer,
  "Good sir, how say you so!
Here have I no belovèd,
  This house I do not know."

Quoth he, "Who from forever
  Was destined unto thee,
Here lies—thy true belovèd,
  Whom thou shalt never see."

I dreamed I passed a doorway
Where, for a sign of death,
White ribbons one was binding
About a flowery wreath.

JANGLED MUSIC

You were the instrument on which I played:
Such heavenly music from your heart I wrung,
And echo, where on the strings my fingers strayed,
Of a new song, that never yet was sung.

Now you are mine no more, how shall I bear
When other hands over the cords are moved,
Of that most exquisite instrument, to hear
All harsh and jangled the great song I loved!

SORROWFUL FREEDOM

Long days I begged my heart, to be
Released from a love that haunted me—
The memory of a last embrace,
A tyrannous and a lovely face.

"Free me," I said, "from an old love,
The memory and the might thereof—
Free to follow and take my fill
Of beauty and laughter where I will."

Never a word my heart replied,
But, on a day, the old love died—
Vanished, never to come again,
All the sorrow and all the pain.

Come, we are free to take our fill
Of beauty and laughter where we will—
O heart, are we free forevermore
From the old sorrow we loved before!

MOCKERY

In dreams you come to mock me, in deep night,
When all the world is dark and slumber-still,
Save for the gleaming of the pale starlight
And far-off wailing of the whip-poor-will.

Then, through the room that held you once, you move
With the old carelessness and dear disdain,
And lift your hands up, in the way I love,
And the old ritual we repeat again.

Still, from your lips that secret I entreat,
The question still unanswered evermore—
And to your lips your finger-tip in sweet
Command you lift, and silence, as before;

And, in the pallor of the waning night,
Laughing, but silently, you fade away:
And morning glimmers, and the feeble light
Widens into the common blaze of day.

SPENT WAVE

Your loveliness was like a wave,
The sudden stroke of her delight
Flooded my heart's adoring cave;
The shock of the belovèd might
Startled the gloom to starry light—
That gave it back, and drank, and gave.

But broken, broken, is her strength,
That vehement glory, loved before—
The sweet rage of her radiant length,
Shattered and shed forevermore:

The adorable ardor, the dear might,
Hurled itself deathward with delight,
And sank upon the sounding shore.

LEGEND

Where are you hid from me, belovĕd one
That I am seeking through the lonely world—
A wanderer, on my way home to you?
Dark is the night, and perilous the road;
At many a breast in longing have I leaned,
At many a wayside worshipped—and my heart
Is tired from long travelling. Perhaps
In centuries to come you wait for me,
And are, as yet, an iris by the stream,
Lifting her single blossom, or the soft
Tremulous haze upon the hills—and we
Have missed each other. Oh, if it be so,
Then may this song reach to the verge of doom,
Ages unborn—to find you where you are,
My lonely one—and like a murmuring string,
Faint with one music, endlessly repeat,
To you not even knowing I was yours,
Her plaintive burden from the dolorous past
Of dusty legend, her archaic woe—
Telling of one upon a hopeless quest,
How, in the dark of time, he lost his way.

THE DIVINE FANTASY

Brother, from what dim world of lonely light,
Trembling on heaven's pinnacles to-night,
Is lifted your sad face of love while you
Stare upward toward me, staring upward, too,
At that faint flame which is your home, between
The leafy branches of these poplars seen—

So hushed, so far! Perhaps, to-night, you scan
Your starry heaven for the star of Man,
High in the trellis of eternity
And glittering arches hung—perhaps, like me,
You, too, look up and wonder. Is it fair,
That world of yours? Are there great cities there,
Populous millions, hearts that beat as these,
Clear meadows and far mountains, shoreless seas,
Shadows of moving armies, thrones that shake?
Does the heart thrill for love there, does it break?
Tell me, are there hushed gardens, quiet tombs,
And mighty poets weaving at their looms
The old, dim wisdoms that outweary time—
And saints, and lifted saviours, the sublime
Ardors and fortitudes beyond belief?
—All blotted out by one small poplar leaf
In the light wind of languid summer stirred!
Brother, what news out of the night, what word,
From the frontiers of mind beyond our ken,
Of mysteries unimagined yet of men,
Compassed by travail of your spirit? Oh,
Could you but reach to us, could we but know
Across the imperturbable old Dark
Some answering glimmer of the ancient spark
Lifted, some token, tangible to sense,
Of the indomitable intelligence
That thrones on matter—language visible,
Crying, "Eternity, and all is well:
Brother, be of good cheer—we, too, have known!
Not lonely moves, not utterly alone,
Your sad fraternity, through the dark of God,
But the confederate legions are abroad;
Life's flag advances on the starry way,
And consciousness, still battling, still at bay,
Holds the bright forts against oblivion—"
What answering thrill would round the planet run!

For we are one—all consciousness is one,
Whatever form it wear, however dressed
In gray or glamour, in whatever breast
It lift its longing: glimmering it moves
Through the green wave; it stamps with startled hooves
The upland pastures of the world; and soars
In heaven, with the eagle; on bright shores
It basks a sunny body; or, in dread,
Lifts from the undergrowth a snaky head,
And darts a flickering tongue; it is most clear
In the lark's throat; among the grasses here,
That couch the ant, it turns a tiny eye
Around the darkness; scampers, and is shy,
In the scared rabbit; through the murmuring air
Wheels, with the beetle; and, where heaven is bare,
Southward, with the wild crane, at summer's close,
Hungering, an eternal pilgrim, goes
On quests implacable. And from the eyes
Of the poised panther gleam the cruelties
Of its stern need, that roams the world, and rends
With tooth or talon; in the hawk descends
On the stunned squirrel; in the squirrel moans
As the hawk strikes; darkens the earth with bones
Of its own wreck, and, hungering again,
Knows in its body the old spur; for when
Hunger, the shadow cast by death, draws near,
Life, on her thousand thrones, feels the one fear—
And, in the lion's roar at dusk, is heard
The unassuageable, insistent word
Of urgent Being, clamorous to be:
Warring and warred upon; eternally
Mingling and mixed; inextricably blent,
Victor and vanquished, in one sacrament,
Body with body, of delight and death,
It moves in splendor; lifts the shuddering breath
Of the spent stag; and in the mind of man

Rebels against the harsh, the cruel, plan—
Flings its frail web of thought across the path
Of suns in heaven, and in holy wrath
On blood of murdered brothers nourished, still
Thunders to all the world, *Thou shalt not kill!*
And the worm's death is in the sparrow's song.

And I have seen it in the gnats that throng
Old shadowy forests, in tumultuous dance;
Or, in the little measuring-worm, advance,
Inch by slow inch, along the swaying stem
Of some exalted flower; or lift the hem
Of the frail butterfly's embroidered cloak,
In gentle breathings that the sun did stroke
Caressingly, with fingers of his heat;
Or, from the dog, yearn upward, and entreat,
With eyes of adoration or of fear,
The great god, Man—"What message, master dear,
From the dim heights beyond me, where you are?"
In the mare's tremulous whinny, in the far
Lowing of cattle from the upland sward,
Or wail of whip-poor-wills, at twilight, poured
On pools of silence plaintively, or cry
Of the lone wolf beneath the glittering sky
Of soundless winter, I have heard the same
Splendor speak forth and utter the one name
Of Life, the dreadful, the magnificent.

All afternoon the passion of heaven spent
On earth its fiery fury, in blind bright
Lightnings of dread, and laughters of delight,
Down shuddering deeps of shaken thunder, where
The delirious longing loosed its sorrowing hair,
Of wind and shower and overshadowing cloud,
Across the belovèd face, in darkness bowed

Or glimmer of light revealed—and cried aloud,
For anger of utter ecstasy, and shed
The wild love of the rushing rain that sped
To the thrilled heart, consenting, of the dim
And rapturous earth, who lifted up to him
Drowsed lips of thirsty flowers—and the cup
Of every flower, for joy, was lifted up,
And drank, and swayed. So, wearied out at length,
Flagged the bright pulses, and the ebbing strength,
With muttering of remembered thunders, passed
Down the large shores of evening—till at last
The exhausted heaven of twilight from afar
Shone, washed of all her sorrows, and a star
Brooded above the fading storm, and saw
The winnowed reaches deepening into awe
Of gradual darkness, and the fields that lay
All drenched and wearied out at dusk of day
And the worn end of things, while far away
The receding fury moaned.

And now they lie
In the same peace around me, and the sky
Holds up her stars; now in the rain-drenched wood
The tree-toad drinks the rain and finds it good,
And trills for joy—the sliding waters grieve
Quietly—now the bat begins to weave,
With intricate motion, on the cloudy loom
Of glamorous starlight mingled and gray gloom,
His dipping flight among the darkened boughs
And dreamy vistas, and the little mouse
Furtively hurries through the lane, his eye
Turned up in terror as the owl goes by:
On softest feathers of silence overhead
Flits the dim shadow of the ancient dread,
Hooded and vague, the cruelty of his beak
Bent on old lustful mysteries. A squeak!

A scuffle! Beating of wings—and in the lane,
Silence! and the old wrong is done again,
That was ere Adam—the triumphant heart
And the defeated, each one doomed to his part,
They play it through, the old tragedy where one
Presence still wars and still is warred upon,
Slays and is slain: while fiercely all around
Shakes the eternal love-song, in shrill sound,
Of grasshopper and cricket; sleepless flow
The immortal tides of longing, to and fro,
On waves of music; endless is the prayer
Of life to the belovèd, everywhere
Lifted in adoration; on dark shores
Beats the insistent passion, that implores
The one dear breast of pity or disdain,
To be reborn, to be reborn again,
Nor perish wholly. The blind earth is thrilled
As with vague rites accomplished, dreams fulfilled,
Marriage and mystic union; all along
Her brimming meadows rings the bridal song
Or chant ecstatic—that great heart of hers
Is touched now the eternal longing stirs
From hill to hollow, and hollow to clear hill,
In many voices mingled, or the still
Ecstasy of the firefly that trails,
Among the shadows where the starlight fails,
His body's burning love. Forever flows
The dreadful drama to its stately close
And endless ending, the fierce carnival
Of death and passion, wherein each and all
Mix, and are mingled, slaughter, blend, and pass
Each into other—the high poem that has
No end and no beginning, that the one
Self in all living forms beneath the sun,
And on all worlds around him and above,
Weaves on the strands of hunger, death, and love.

I see it all, I hear it all, and lie
Under my swaying poplars, and the sky
Is fretted with frail leaves. The mortal dream
Is in my heart: I hear the night-hawk's scream
Shatter the silver silences, I hear
The owl's clear tremolo rise over-clear—
The mouse's blood along his veins has made
His love-note lovelier and the night afraid
Of beauty's dreadful secret; and I know
Soft shapes of stealth that in the darkness go,
Of furry lusts and gnawing hungers, small
Twittering things obscene, that flit or crawl
In furtive secrecy, vague mouths, and blurred,
Of the night creature or nocturnal bird,
Amorphous moth and bat-wing—and the earth,
With all her burrows, nooks and nests of birth
Crowded, and wreck of many a perished might,
By the ebbed waters of life's fierce delight
Washed up on shores of silence, spoiled and spurned
Altars where once the sacred fire burned,
Forms flowing back into the formlessness—
In a supreme embrace, a long caress,
Mixing their bodies with the mother mould—
And all the heaven of stars, around me rolled,
Whose brooding eyes have stared so many an age
Upon this theatre of lust and rage,
Of death and adoration. And a breeze
Rustles the branches of the poplar-trees.

Dear spark, that shinest in the solitude!
One consciousness, that, in the brotherhood
Of all earth's living creatures, movest on
The shaken ramparts of oblivion—
Whose starry cry, across the darkness hurled,
Makes music in the silence of the world!
Life, whose sole splendor in red slaughter spills

The blood of its own breast; in many wills
Wars on the one will; and, in wrath or dread,
Feeds on itself and, on itself being fed,
Shines forth in song and color; gilds the dress
Of the green-fly; and pours its loveliness
In rapture on the earth; in theatres
Of crowded congregation sits—nor stirs—
Watching itself, itself the spectacle;
And builds the swallow's breast, and shapes the shell
And all these mansions of its thought that are
Between the morning and the evening-star,
On earth, in heaven, or in the glimmering caves
And grottoes of the world below the waves;
Butchers the ox, and, gladdened by his meat,
In the young mother's downward smile is sweet;
Or, sated of its hunger, walks abroad
In symphonies, and poems, and prayers to God;
Sins, and has conscience and, repenting, sins;
And, in the lowly patient spider, spins
Its fragile web; and in these words of mine
Flings out its groping utterance, line by line,
Across the intangible abyss of thought—
With infinite passion, infinite patience, wrought—
Dread loveliness, be strong in me, be strong,
To utter forth your meaning in my song!

THE LION-HOUSE

Always the heavy air,
  The dreadful cage, the low
Murmur of voices, where
  Some force goes to and fro
In an immense despair.

As through a haunted brain—
  With tireless footfalls
The obsession moves again,
  Trying the floor, the walls,
Forever, but in vain.

In vain, proud force! A might,
  Shrewder than yours, did spin
Around your rage that bright
  Prison of steel, wherein
You pace for my delight.

And oh, my heart, what doom,
  What warier will, has wrought
The cage, within whose room
  Paces your burning thought,
For the delight of Whom?

THE BRIGHT DOOM

(1927)

TO MY MOTHER

Spirit of Life,
How great a lover of yourself you made,
In fashioning this spirit! I have walked
The earth in ecstasy and adoration.
Live in me now—stretch out my heart, while here,
On one of your innumerable worlds,
I stand, and lift my face into the night.

NOON: AMAGANSETT BEACH

Glory—glory to God in the highest—and on earth,
Glory! The everlasting sun
Has laid his hand upon the harp-string, with the music of his mirth
Heaven and ocean are one chord, in unison.

He has spoken, he has spoken—from his midmost throne
In the blue hollow of noon he has spoken! Heaven has heard
The sound of the song of his shining; he has made known
To listening space his wonder, and revealed his word,

Who sheds his light upon the earth—and upon the dark place,
Light! And upon the waters of the sea,
Light! O Father, pour down thy light upon me, touch my face!
Hallow me, my Father—even me.

Here, where the long ranges of the dunes roll
Their tawny billows to the south and to the north, and against the sky
Flutters the pale sea-grass, fresh is the wind—and the whole
Clear hollow of heaven is full of the wine of thy glory, even as I.

The waves curve upward—they fail, they fall,
Dragging, dragging, along the dim sea-reach,
The heavy hem of the garment of the waters; rhythmical, rhythmical
Is the rustle of the sea's robe upon the beach.

Along the shallows, along the far shore-line,
They burst in thunder and light—where the gray shingles gleam,
The tongue of the foam is a tongue of fire; the hollows of the breakers shine,
Darken—and are shattered as a dream.

But out where the further waters have their sleep,
On the pale meadows of ocean, on the barren fields and bare,
That the sea-bird wanders, that the sea-wind wanders—on the illimitable Deep,
Silence. The silence of the immensity is like a prayer.

Interminable—interminable—interminable—the void sea,
The many ways, the many waves. In the huge round
Of the sorrowful heavens, in the hushed vacancy,
No voice. . . . Vastness without bound.

This is my heart's country: these lonely lands
Are one with my wild, lonely heart; these winds and waves that roam
Old desolate ways forever, they are one with me—these sterile sands
And bitter waters. Here is my heart's home.

Amid these large horizons and spaces that she loves,
My spirit's thought, on lorn adventurings
And inconsolable quests intent, endlessly moves—
And spreads upon the eternal solitude her fleeting wings:

Even as a sea-bird on the changeless, changing,
Pale pastures lost, as a sea-bird on the wild waste astray,
Searching the everlasting reaches—failing—faltering—like a sea-bird ranging—
Wandering, wandering the wide way.

. . . . . .

Loneliness—loneliness forever. Dune beyond dune,
Stretches the infinite loneliness—pale sand and pale sea-grass,
Pale beaches, mile upon mile. In the immensity of noon
A hawk moves upon the wind. Clouds darken, and pass. . . .

The sound of the breathing of the sea is hushed, on the far shore
Her robe lies fallen; the white waves, one by one,
Subside into slumber, and cease into slumber: from the blue vault to the blue floor
Heaven is a shining room filled full of the sun.

He hallows the waters. The benediction of his light is shed
Upon the proud waters. Emerald—turquoise—chrysoprase,
Glitter the waters! The garment of his glory is spread
Upon the everlasting waters, upon the everlasting ways.

THE UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY

Heaven is full of stars to-night, the earth
Lies hushed, as she shall lie some day perhaps
When life and death no longer trouble her—
No voice, no cry, in the whole countryside.
The empty road rambles through field and thicket,
And in the road are prints of hoof and foot:
Along the surface of this lonely planet,
Now naked to the hunger of the stars,
Man and beast—on the old pilgrimage—
They passed together here, not long ago.

What was it they were looking for I wonder,
Or if, themselves, they knew? Where were they going?
Footsteps—always footsteps going somewhere—
What country is it that they all are seeking,
Who up and down the world, by night or day,
Move with such patience, always to one end?

Not the least sound. Not the least leaf disturbs
The immemorial majesty of heaven.
Footprints—only footprints going somewhere . . .

Wherever they were going, they are gone.

THE HOLY EARTH

In the immense cathedral of the holy earth,
Whose arches are the heavens and the great vault above,
Groined with its myriad stars—what miracles of birth,
What sacraments of death, what rituals of love!

Her nave is the wide world and the whole length of it—
One flame, on all her altars, kindles her many fires;
Wherever the clear tapers of trembling life are lit
Resound for joy the old indomitable choirs.

The holy church of earth with clamorous worshippers
Is crowded, and fierce hungers—faithful, every one,
To the one faith; that stern and simple faith of hers
Contents the heart that asks no pity, giving none.

Each on the other feeds, and all on each are fed,
And each for all is offered—a living offering, where
In agony and triumph the ancient feast is spread,
Life's sacramental supper, that all her sons may share.

They mingle with one another, blend—mingle—merge, and flow,
Body into wild body; in rapture endlessly
Weaving, with intricate motions of being, to and fro,
The pattern of all Being, one mighty harmony:

One Body of all bodies woven and interwrought—
One Self in many selves, through their communion
In love and death, made perfect; wherein each self is nought
Save as it serve the many, mysteriously made One.

And all are glad for life's sake, and all have found it good
From the beginning; all, through many and warring ways,
In savage vigor of life and wanton hardihood,
Live out, like a brave song, the passion of their days.

With music woven of lust and music woven of pain,
Chapel and aisle and choir, the great cathedral rings:
One voice, in all her voices, chanting the old disdain
Of pity—the clean hunger of all primal things.

From the trembling of Arcturus even to the tiny nest
Of the gray mouse, the glories of her vast frame extend:
The span of her great arches, stretching from east to west,
Is endless—the immense reaches are without end.

. . . . . .

Evening closes. The light from heaven's high window falls
Vaguer and softer now. In vain the twilight pleads
With stubborn night—his shadow looms on the massive walls.
Darkness. The immemorial ritual proceeds.

The spider, in her quivering web, watches and waits;
The moth flutters, entangled—in agony of fear
He beats amid the toils that bind him; she hesitates
Along the trembling wires—she pauses—she draws near.

She weaves her delicate bondage around him; in the net,
As in a shroud, he labors—but, labor as he will,
The cunning threads hold fast; her drowsy mouth is set
Against the body that shivers softly, and is still.

And through the leafy dark the owl with noiseless flight
Moves, peering craftily among the tangled trees
And thickets of the wood all slumbrous in the night—
The fledgling's bitter cry comes sharp upon the breeze.

With dreadful ceremony all things together move
To the one end: shrill voices in triumph all around
Prolong deliriously their monotone of love—
Arches and aisles are heavy with incense and dim sound.

Hush, the whole world is kneeling! Murmurous is the air—
The Host is lifted up. Upon the altar lies
The sacramental Body. The wind breathes like a prayer—
Solemnly is renewed the eternal sacrifice.

With mingled moan and might of warring wills made one
The vast cathedral shudders. From chancel, nave and choir
Sounds the fierce hymn to life: her holy will be done!
Upon her myriad altars flames the one sacred fire.

LONELINESS WITHOUT END

Unsearchable is the Imagination
That stretches out the heavens, and around
The shores of earth widens, in exultation,
The infinite waters without bourn or bound.

Between the immensities of heaven and ocean
My spirit's thought makes forward falteringly,
Lone as a sea-bird that with veering motion
Moves on the windy meadows of the sea.

Far though she fare, far though her flight aspire,
However far—it shall but be to find
New wastes beyond, new ways for the desire
Of the unfathomable and spacious Mind.

In the vast reaches of His meditation—
The sorrowful distances—her stricken wings
Flag, failing her. My heart's imagination
Faints, in the lonely endlessness of things.

THIS QUIET DUST

Here in my curving hands I cup
This quiet dust. I lift it up.

Here is the mother of all thought,
Of this the shining heavens are wrought,
The laughing lips, the feet that rove,
The face, the body, that you love:
Mere dust, no more—yet nothing less;
And this has suffered consciousness,
Passion and terror; this again
Shall suffer passion, death, and pain.

For, as all flesh must die, so all,
Now dust, shall live. 'Tis natural,
Yet hardly do I understand—
Here in the hollow of my hand
A bit of God Himself I keep,
Between two vigils fallen asleep.

LONE BEAUTY

Immortal beauty in this mortal heart,
Lone beauty dwelling in these hearts that die,
How shall it be with me when you are gone,
Leaving me broken in the darkness here?

Where shall I seek you in that hour when time
Roars in my ears, and the reality
At whose dear breast my mouth of being clung
Recedes, casting me off? Then shall I hear
The sound of some irrevocable thing
Slowly withdrawn—shouts and reverberations,
Echoes and murmurs of the sea of life
Ebbing forever from the fading brain—
And my last thought run on, crying, to you.

But you—O darling and indifferent—
Within the multitudinous hearts of men
Shall live forever, lonely as before.

SEA-VOYAGE

To what dark purpose was the will employed
  That fashioned, ere the dawn of time grew dim,
  The waste of ocean—from clear rim to rim
A crystal chamber, sorrowful and void?

For, surely, not without design He wrought
  These vast horizons on whose margins rest
  The extremes of heaven, nor from east to west
Widened the waters to the bounds of thought.

Half-hopeful, half-incredulous, I wait
  For some gigantic presence to assume
  His throne, in the large circle of the room.
The dreadful distances are desolate.

In vain! In vain! He is departed hence,
  Whose breath troubles the waters of the sea:
  Twilight and night are sworn to secrecy,
The heavens preserve their ancient innocence.

In the enormous throne-room of the sun
  No voice is audible. The waves are mute.
  Solitude, infinite and absolute,
Bears witness to the unreturning One.

Evening, on the lorn reaches of the sea,
  Comes vast and patient; but the night is kind—
  Her hand is pity, scarfing up the blind
Sorrows and wastes of the immensity.

The wind is soft among the swaying spars.
  Heaven deepens; dusk reveals the glittering height
  And cloudless glory of the arch of night,
Bowed down from rim to rim with solemn stars.

When dawn across the broad and billowing plain
  Casts her pale fire, the monstrous solitude
  Of huddling waters—the old hope renewed—
Thrills with blind love, and yearns, but all in vain.

Sheer to the east, sheer to the west extend,
  Far as the wandering wings of thought may grope,
  The eternal vacancies. No hope, no hope—
Distance, distance forever, without end.

Hour by hour, and day on burning day,
  Our vessel plows the soft, reluctant foam;
  Hour by hour, and mile on mile, we roam
The lonely and the everlasting way.

Still fades before us the enormous round—
  Blue sea below, blue heaven overhead—
  The Void, eternal and untenanted,
A chamber for His splendor, without bound.

STONE AND IRON

Night—and the shadow of great walls.
  The city sleeps: her muffled pulses start—
And ebb, flagging in the long intervals.
  I lie alone, with wakeful heart.

In stone and iron bound,
  Brood the old sorrows—longing and heartache
  In many a room are fierce awake.
My heart listens. Not a sound.

My heart listens. A cry
  Pierces the dark—a lonely voice somewhere
Trembles, and is still. I hear a cry
  Out of the dark, somewhere.

Night slumbers on. . . .
The cañons are
Empty—no echo save
For a lone car
Far-off, that rumbles and is gone.
Then silence—the silence of the grave.

THE LOWLAND COUNTRY

Oh, that I might be again
In the leafy solitudes
Where the ancient beauty broods
And the heart is healed of pain!

In a certain hidden place
Shined on by the evening-star,
Where the woods and waters are
Dear as a belovèd face.

'Tis a country to my mind:
All the hills and heights are green,
With clear meadows in between—
All the woods and ways are kind.

There the spider all day long
Spins her web with cunning skill,
And the cricket on the hill
Makes one music of his song.

Night and day a dreamy noise
Hovers round it—night and day;
And the world is far away,
And the silence has a voice.

In the lowlands, in the deep
Solitude for miles around,
To a hushed and happy sound
Time itself has fallen asleep.

Oh, that I were there again,
By the meadows drenched with dew!
Where the ancient dream comes true,
And the heart is healed of pain.

AUTUMN ALONG THE BEACHES

A year, with all its days, has come and gone
Since last under the arch of heaven I stood
In the old ecstasy, and looked upon
These endless waters, this bleak solitude.

All is unchanged: the sea-birds wheel and pass,
The patient dunes go down along the sky
In wavering lines of green, from the scant grass
A single cricket lifts his solemn cry.

Autumn is on the wind; the chilly air
Is wide and vacant, the pale waters seem
Paler and lonelier—lonely and bare
The tawny beaches, fading like a dream.

On the right hand of heaven there is light,
And on the left is darkness, and the gray
Cover of cloud; southward the sea is bright,
But northward, sorrow and shadow all the way.

Dull blues and purples, glossy black and green,
On the one hand—and on the other, sheer
Glory of gold. The waters in between
Are doubtful—half in hope, and half in fear.

But always a cold light along the rim
Wells secretly; the under-heavens cast
Cold light along the verge, under the dim
Borders of darkness where the clouds are massed.

Around one center the slow bulk revolves;
  Far out, a haze curtains the mystery
Of some ecstatic deed—the cloud dissolves,
  And sheds his drifting rain upon the sea.

It is the bridal of heaven and ocean; brief
  Is the rapt moment ere the gauzy veil,
Crumbling, is lifted. As with tremulous grief
  Of parting, the divided wastes are pale.

Wan wastes of wave, and glimmering wastes that crowd
  The worn horizon—passion and regret.
Sea-scud, and faltering light, and trailing cloud,
  Reluctant, where the old longing labors yet.

The slant rain slackens. From the hopeful, blue
  Meadows of heaven, widening evermore,
A sudden shaft of light comes piercing through,
  And points a shining finger down the shore.

Alternate gleam and shadow! Like a wand
  The running radiance all along the line
Travels, with soundless motion. Far beyond,
  Headlands and dunes and brightening beaches shine.

Darkness is rolled away: the great banks move
  Northward, save for a few high streaks that show
The vault of heaven still higher, far above—
  So high they seem, yet lie so far below.

They move like swans upon an azure lake—
  The bleak skies of the autumn afternoon
Wash round them, in chill loveliness, and make
  Their fleecy edges brighter, fading soon.

The room of the world is bare from bound to bound,
A vacant chamber: heaven overhead
Is a blue ceiling; the heavens that wall it round
Are blue; before me the blue floors are spread.

Blue mile on mile, from deep to azure height
Eastward, the everlasting arches loom—
Blue mile on mile forever, to the bright
Limits. The world is like an empty room.

On the void sea no sail, no sign. Far out,
A lone bird, through the shifting corridors
Of billowing water blown and tossed about,
Wavers and veers along the windy floors.

Loneliness, endlessness, and mystery!
No voice disturbs the silence of the sun.
No shadow is on the surface of the sea.
The clouds are scattered, and darkness is undone.

The huddled waters in their sorrow move
At the wind's will, that herds them without stay
Over the barren reaches, drove on drove—
A myriad waves all moving the one way.

SUNDOWN

Evening, and shadows lengthening to the east,
Cold light along the rim—and our Father, the sun,
Gone westward in a glory of trailing cloud.

O holy Father of us all—
Praise him, earth, with all your voices!
Praise him, wind and sea!
For though he forsake you, surely he shall return.

Hail, Father, and well done—for now it is ended.
The earth, my mother, praises,
And I praise you—
Who am, by her, your true-born child.

THE HEART GROWS OLD

I

I have come back at last to the old home,
After long days of absence: it was here
That in my burning youth I loved and sang,
And all that I have loved and lost is here;
And still the meadows and the woods are dear
And beautiful—though now to me they are
Less beautiful, less dear.

Earth and her dreams remain forever young,
It is not beauty that grows old, but I:
The moon floods the pale cloud, and from the grass
The cricket sounds the endless song—but I
Am silent. Listen!—it is the owlet's cry.
O heart of mine, what distance have we come
Since last we heard that cry!

II

Earth and the ancient joy are ever young—
When has she changed, for all her many days!
The cloudy banners of her hope are hung,
Spring after spring, through all the woodland ways.

The meditations of the secret earth
Are steadfast and enduring: these remain—
Her sacramental rites of death and birth,
And the old mysteries of love and pain.

Time and the years like wandering clouds go by:
  The moon still floods the wood, and from the hill
The cricket lifts the immemorial cry—
  And the immortal joy is flowing still.

The everlasting song is still unsung,
  And the eternal tale is never told:
Earth and the ancient joy are ever young,
  It is the heart that withers and grows old.

RETURN TO EARTH

I have no fear at last to be
Home with her that cradled me,
Nor shall my being shrink to blend
With her dark being, in the end;
So one we are, so well I know
The bounty of the heart below—
Her holy love. Have I not heard
The lonely and prophetic word
Her hushed hills and valleys keep
Locked in their eternal sleep!
In Bethlehem, in buried days,
So the sacred story says,
Out of her ancient dream awoke
The elemental heart, and spoke
Such thunder in the ears of men
As echoes ever after—then
Closed her lips in sleep again.

SOLITUDES

My heart is a dark forest where no voice is heard,
  Nor sound of foot, by day or night—nor echo, borne
  Down the long aisles and shadowy arches, of a horn,
Trembling—nor cry of beast, nor call of any bird.

But always through the deep solitudes a grieving wind
Moves like the voice of a vast prayer: it is your love
Lifting and bending leaf and bough—while, far above,
One thought soars like a hawk, in the heaven of my mind.

THOSE TWO

It was love's holy day, so great and sorrowful-hearted
That day was: all the little, all the common things
Shone with the light eternal—it was the day we parted,
The last of our evenings.

You whispered the old words, you broke the sacred bread,
You poured anew the living wine—and quietly
You lifted up your eyes, pleading, and your eyes said
Always, "Remember me."

And lo! at the last supper, as once around the board
The disciples with the Master sat, I sat with you:
Judas was seated there, and Love, the very Lord—
Those two.

ONCE IN A LONELY HOUR

Upon my breast
Once, in a lonely hour, your head was laid,
And you had rest
From much that troubled you—you were no longer afraid.

But now, even here
No refuge is: you shall not ever lie,
As once, in my heart's shelter here,
Poor heart, while the great hounds of time go roaring by.

Vain was the strength
You leaned on, in that hour—you did not guess
How vain the strength
Whereon you propped your ignorant lovingness.

And yet—what more
  Has life to offer life, here in the lone
Tumult? A little rest, no more—
  Upon a heart as troubled as its own.

COMPASSION

I had cried out to you,
From the darkness and the solitude of my pain,
And yet you would not hear;
And so I cried again.
Then—suddenly, you were near.

Was it myself
That answered, when I cried so timidly?
Yes—for the One
Being has many forms: it was
Myself, in another breast, that answered me.

TRUCE

Harsh is the struggle, and too soon we learn
  In life's blind tumult to give blow for blow,
  Thrust for keen thrust; armed and alert we go,
Little is the security we earn
Before the dark tide of the battle turn,
  Setting against us—and it has been so
  From the beginning and, for all we know,
It shall be, to that end none may discern.

So, to our hardened hearts all strange they come,
  Those hours of truce amid the iron days,
    When, unaccustomed, for a brief period—
Baffled and faint, incredulous and dumb—
  On one kind human heart, in love's amaze,
    We lie at rest, as on the heart of God.

THE DARK MEMORY

It was our love's Gethsemane, and you wept.
Around us, in the drab twilight, the little room
That had known our love, that had known our tears and our laughter, kept
Shamed silence. Silently round us rose the gloom—

And in the street the first few lamps were gleaming—day's
Last fire on garish windows glared. The light
Feebled; over the huddled city's wastes and ways
Gravely and pitifully came the night.

Darkness—and from far-off a siren mourned. The sands
Of time drew downward, but still no word was said,
No word—only your poor hands lying in my hands,
So hopeless, against my shoulder your poor head.

You were so tired, you were so hushed, so fain,
Poor love, all blind with weeping; pinched and small
Your face shone in the glimmer—but I, who felt no pain
Save pity, I was so eager to end it all.

And I could not endure it; suddenly my heart grew old,
In the gray evening, in the drab twilight—while, one by one,
Your hot tears ached along my hands. Oh, stern and cold
I sat beside you, in that last hour, and you wept alone.

. . . . . .

Brief was our parting, very brief, and without a word.
With a mute kiss we parted—you turned, and I,
Closing the door, in the outer hall-way heard,
Already as if from far away, your sudden cry.

That cry! What silences followed—what silences haunt the space
Of the years grown wide between us! On barren rhyme
I have wreaked my youth; I have followed a phantom loveliness —your face
Fades in the hungry darknesses of time.

But now, in my nights, now, in my loneliness, I know
The bitter passion that moved those tears—and why,
When my life went home to you, when the tides groped, you shuddered so—
And the agony of that love, the dolor of that cry.

Had you foreseen, O wise and sad, the unkinder ways
My feet must wander, on strange roads? Did you foresee,
Beyond that wilful hour, the desolate nights and days—
And the tears that I pitied so, were they shed for me?

O fatuous dream, that like a sword clove us apart!
Dear room, where once your sorrowing lips on mine
Trembled—where humbly for my proud and ignorant heart
You broke the bread and poured the living wine!

Love, I have heard it told, is God, and once Love found me—
Across my heart his very heart was bowed—
He came to me out of the darkness, his arms were laid around me:
But I was stubborn, I was foolish, and very proud.

Often, often now, in the silence of the after-years,
In the night, I remember your weeping. O my own,
In the darkness I have remembered them, your sacred tears
Shed for my sake—and how you wept alone.

HUSHED MIDNIGHT

I heard the owlet call,
A little, quavering call—
Timidly, timidly, out of the dark it cried:
'Twas midnight,
By candle-light
I sat alone, and the light was burning low,
And I thought of you that once had loved me so,

And of my lonely youth, my stubborn pride.
Heart of my heart, it was you out there in the night—
It was you that cried.

I SOUGHT YOU

I sought you but I could not find you, all night long
I called you, but you would not answer—all the night
I wandered over hill and valley; heaven was bright
With crowded stars, and I was calling you in many a song.

The road through wood and meadow rambled here and there:
Few were the travellers on that lonely road, and none
Had heard of you, by wood or meadowland—not one
Had heard of you, or seen you passing anywhere.

At midnight, thirsting for your loveliness, I lay
Under the shadow of the leafy hill, and cried
Three times, calling upon your name. No voice replied . . .
The pebbly brooks went babbling, babbling, all the way.

The waters had a drowsy sound, the hills were steep—
My heart grew tired travelling; but there was no place
That suited me, and I was homesick for your face.
Dreaming of you, at the wood's edge I fell asleep.

STORM-WIND

You came—and like a stormy wind your love
Blew over the lone waters, and the sea
Of my heart's life was shaken violently,
And all the trembling waves began to move,

And cried their love out to the shore, and cast
Their love upon the shore—but you were gone!
Yet still that restless flood is roaring on,
Where once so great a wind of beauty passed.

And still, from the calm heaven of my mind,
My thought, like a great hawk on lonely wing,
Watches those waters laboring, laboring,
In troubled multitude, broken and blind.

REVERBERATION

At night, in the old house of life I lie alone:
Spiders have fastened their soft webs, like clouds, between
Rafter and ceiling; threshold and gray floor are grown
Heavy with dust, where for so long no foot has been.

Mice, in the dark of the old walls, gnaw at the deep
Roots of the night, and softly on the dewy air
The cricket's cry comes drifting in—even in sleep
I hear it, but I am too sorrowful to care.

Love has left me, and song has left me, and I know
I am a harp, silent to all those lovely things
That laid such hands upon me here so long ago.
Night deepens. Darkness covers me with her wings.

So many a night, with all its stars, has come and gone,
Watching my rest; so many an evening all in vain
Has lit for me her trembling lamps. Sleep is upon
These eyelids, that are sealed in slumber and disdain.

Only the murmur, vaguely felt, of the hushed blood,
That on the shores of the old dream, like a vast sea,
Moves, in the darkness, mourning; and in the solitude
Of my heart's forest a far horn sounds drowsily. . . .

THE MULTITUDINOUS ONE

Behold in us the Multitudinous One,
The myriad motions of whose Being are
Life, and the pain of life: one Self we are,

Though clothed in many forms. These laboring minds,
These bodies, bruised and broken, are but strands
In the eternal Body, that through birth,
Death, and the throes of travail without end,
Renews itself; and all our tumult is
But the one Will among the many here
When, with fierce pity and remorseless love,
And with unutterable joy, it strains,
Seeking a passage through the bleeding web
And tangled meshes of blind wills at war—
God's Being, in act, which is man's agony,
And glory, too: for on that agony
His rapture rests; our passion is His peace,
And He is woven of us, as we of Him.

MEDITATION

Evening has quieted the wind, the night
Is soft around me while I sit alone,
And reading, by calm candle-light.

The voice of a forgotten poet cries,
From the clear page, up to my listening heart—
And my heart listens, and replies.

And yet, even in loveliness I find
No refuge from old wonder; the old thoughts
And the old questions come to mind.

Was it for this the ravin and the rage,
The lust and hunger of the centuries,
Clamored—to close in this calm page?

What blood was shed for this! What roving herds
In meadowy pastures, what brave things, have died
To feed the music of these words!

Beauty is desolate, being the crown
And end of all; to her the laboring years
Lift yearning hands, and Time bows down.

The ages travail with a great unrest,
In agony and ecstasy, to build
The frail arch of one dolorous breast.

I will not think of this, I will read on
In these calm pages. It is written here:
The Song to the Belovèd One.

The heart that wrought it, and the cunning hand,
Are stilled forever, and the poet lies,
Forgotten, in a far-off land.

The iron bondage of old Time and Space
Withholds me from him, whom I have not seen—
Nor shall I look upon his face.

He takes his ease in the dark earth and there
Has rest from all his labors, and the night
Covers him with her heavy hair.

If I could pierce into that hushed abode
Of slumber and corruption, I should find
The mouth from which this sorrow flowed.

It would be quiet now, for all it cried—
Quiet and imperturbable: it is
With its own sleep preoccupied.

Yet, surely, in this very room it sings
Miraculously to my heart to-night!
How shall I understand these things?

I will not think of them, I will read on
In these calm pages. It is written here:
The Song to the Belovèd One.

The night is hushed around me while I move
Darkly, with dreamy thought, from page to page,
From line to line, of grief and love.

Now, in the silence of the night, I read
These words, the opening of the final prayer:
Song, for thy sake, with Death I plead.

The lonely splendor of Antares shines
Through the barred window, and an aphis crawls
Among the letters and the lines.

He moves among them with uncertain will,
Fitfully, and between the words, *"I plead,"*
Falters a moment—then is still.

Little he guesses what these letters are,
Nor I the meaning of the trembling Word
Written beyond us, star on star.

The night covers us both, and we are driven,
Like leaves before the wind, through the immense
And glittering wilderness of heaven.

Earth takes us with her: silently she swings
Through the old orbit, bearing in her breast
The drowsy mouth—the mouth that sings.

And yet, all this lives only in my mind,
And when that darkens, the whole world will darken
Suddenly—the whole world go blind.

All I have touched, all I have loved and known,
Will fail me—and the breast of Life draw back,
Leaving me in the dark, alone.

O starry universe, hung in the clear
Bell of my mind, be living in me now—
Dwell in me for a moment here!

How often, in the many minds of men,
Have you been born, only to pass away—
Dying, with every mind, again!

This is a thought that is too hard for me:
It is a bitter thing to think upon,
That, to myself, all this shall be

As if it had not been—when I am gone.

THE MASQUE OF BEING

The fish-hawk over the water, and the gray fish that goes
  Glimmering through the water—the preyer and the prey—
They follow or hasten ever; they wrestle together, they close
  In the old fearful fashion, in the old fierce way.

Harsh are the rites of being, and bitter is the war
  Waged between life and life by the blind will-to-be—
Yet all if they but knew it, are one: lovers they are
  Who strive, each with the other, in a great mystery.

COMMUNION

Sacred is the communion of man with man
Through speech: dearer than wine, dearer than bread,
Is the low talk around the open fire
Or under the clear stars, whereby his heart
Is mingled with the heart of his own kind.

After the fret and turmoil of the day
The tired seamstress leans into the twilight,
And, in the alley, with her neighbor shares
Grave nothings; while in billiard-room or bar,
'Mid thunder of laughter, the old joke goes round,
Or ribald story. Wherever two are met,
There speech is, and the ancient fellowship,
Making us one, who are but wanderers
Upon a lonely way.

And therefore men,
That death itself may not divide them forever,
Have whispered to each other across the years,
In rune or rhyme, ballad, fable or myth,
Their passions and their sorrows—and a glory
Gathers about his memory who most
Has shared with us, out of his love, himself.
Blessèd beyond all others are the heads
Upon whose front falls the immortal gleam—
In distant lands perhaps, beyond far seas,
From sun-washed islands or gray promontories,
Lifted across the years to give us light—
Spirits at which our groping youth was fed,
The drowsy lips from which all dreams come down,
Makers of music, whisperers of secrets;
Though in the darkness of the centuries
Hidden away—the hands folded, the heart
Quiet—still musical, still murmuring,
(In many a legend, many a rustling page,
Sad songs and dreams that drift about the world)
The old incorrigible ecstasy—
Despite all death, despite all doubt, all doom,
Still passionate, still intimate with us,
And full of a fierce love.

And sweet it is
To sit—echoing spirit and singing spirit—

As friend with friend, by the wayside of the years,
Above the dust of time and circumstance,
And hear, in the lone hour of delight,
The sacred things that man has said to man
For comfort of his sad and wondering heart,
News from a traveller on the common way—
How lies the land, whether the hills be steep
Or valleys fruitful, where the waters run,
Or March hides the first flower—ponderings,
Praise of the road, doubt for the journey's end
Or of the purpose of the pilgrimage,
(If there *be* purpose in the pilgrimage),
Questions, questions, and reassurances,
Words that the generations past have worn
Upon their lips, for love's sake—that shall lie,
Trembling, upon the lips we may not reach:
The immortal Legend, the old tameless Song,
Wherein, to us—who all too easily,
Too often and too easily, forget—
The splendor, the unimaginable splendor,
Holy and stern, of all reality,
In happy moments is revealed anew;
Hints of a meaning, echoes of the high
Sorrowful music to which all things move,
With all their warring voices, to one end,
Violently. Amen—so *shall* they move,
Till Time's lone harp fall silent, till the years
Slumber, and all be as a tale long told.

THE VICTORY

I shall take flight from Death on sudden wings,
  In some swift song—he shall not have me here:
For all his cunning, all his snares and slings,
  I shall escape him, whom I fear.

Then, though he wander through all woods and ways,
  He will not reach to *me,* out of the strong
Net of these tangled nights and days
  Escaped forever in a song.

But now my wings are broken and I hide
  In this tall grass, to hear his foot go by
  Stealthily, stealthily—
Searching the field on either side.

Heal me, O Time, and I will rise again,
  On swifter wings and for a surer flight,
    Remembering this pain!
So, when he comes, he shall not find me here,
  By day or night—
    But search forever, and in vain.

THE YEARS

My dreams wear thinner as the years go by:
  The stony face of Fate, into my own,
Stares, with that granite look of hers—and I
  Stare back, with a still face, but not of stone.

GOLGOTHA

Take me down from this cross, for now my body is broken,
  And the feet pierced and the hands pierced, and in my side
The heart fails me—it breaks, and the words that I have spoken
  Are as nothing: you were deceived in me, and I have lied.

Take me down, lower me from the tree—yet slowly,
  My spirit is heavy and my heart sick, my flesh is sore
From the bruising and from the bitter scourging, and the holy
  Dream that was in me once is in me now no more.

There is no virtue left in me, there is not any
  Hope left in me to help you: if it must be done,
As it was written in the old days, that one for many
  Should be uplifted—truly, I am not that one.

The nails bite deep into my flesh—shall I endure it
  Longer? No longer! Loose me, take me down and lay
My body in the cool tomb—and seal it up, secure it
  Against the faces, the proud faces, the blind day.

For I am tired and have need of night to cover me,
  And secrecy wherein to hide my shame, and deep
Silence and solitude forevermore, and over me
  Darkness—and a lone resting-place, and a long sleep.

And yet, nevertheless, perhaps a little longer
  I may endure it. Father, if this thing must be,
Give me the strength! Ah yet, perhaps, a little longer. . . .
  I will pour out Thy love upon them in my agony.

AFFIRMATION*

I

We are one self, who are emprisoned here
Upon this turning planet as it swings
Through the lone waste and labyrinth of heaven—
One in our plight, one in our common doom,
One in our stubborn questioning, and one,
Beyond all other creatures, in the sole
Sad consciousness of our predicament—
Pilgrims and outcasts between birth and death,
Scanning the frontiers of the night for news;
Probing the atom; challenging the cell;

*Delivered before the Phi Beta Kappa Society, Harvard Chapter, Cambridge, June 24, 1927

Knocking at every gate and every door
Of the inexorable silences;
Wondering; doubting; grieving; worshipping—
Perplexed before the mystery of things.

Now while the earth turns eastward, half in light
And half in darkness; from the Himalayan snows
And Mongol uplands, to the Texan desert
Or where the starry waters dawnward heave
Out of the west from Asia—on blue hills,
'Mid iron cities or green solitudes,
By land or sea, in darkness or in light—
The restless Spirit moves in many ways,
The multitudinous Being is abroad.
We gather in theatres; we brood alone;
We pour with laughter through the shining streets;
We till the earth; we lift our towers to heaven;
We watch beside the sick-bed; on gray capes,
On crags and headlands of the world, we set
Our winking fires, from coast to coast; or wander
The wastes of ocean with a furrowing prow;
We sleep; we turn the pages of a book,
And move, in silence, out of space and time;
We grapple each other; we hate; we fear; we kill;
We cry aloud; we yearn, kneeling in prayer,
Lifting our faces to the emptiness;
In busy factories and teeming dens,
Weaving the fabric of the world's desire;
Lying in prisons; sitting upon thrones;
Judging the earth in wisdom and in truth.
Now while the earth turns eastward—even now,
The divine tragedy of man proceeds:
The poet walks the room; the ballerina
Advances to the footlights—on one body
Is fixed the hunger of a thousand eyes;
The priest moves to the altar; and the harlot

Slinks through the alleys of the darkened town;
The bride puts on her bridal-wreath; the judge
Condemns the felon; and the dying man
Coughs—and is silent, as the new-born babe
Nestles in the exhausted mother's arm.
Over the death-bed now some head bows down;
Somewhere the cry of the new soul is heard;
While, through the leafy lanes, the lovers move
With loitering step, or pause among the shadows,
Kindling between their lips the flame of life.
Perpetual death, perpetual rebirth,
Perpetual passion and perpetual pain!
From shore to shore the violent Being rolls,
With all its motions, all its warring wills—
Vast as the sea, forever in unrest;
The waves foam upward, and the waves subside,
And the one ocean gives and gathers all.

Now while the earth turns eastward, half in light
And half in darkness, in her breast she bears
Those other and much greater multitudes
That are as one with us as our own blood—
The nameless or the unforgotten dead,
Whose faces we have never looked upon
Or voices ever heard—our forefathers,
Buried long since: farmers and merchants, kings,
Discoverers and captains, voyagers
On ocean solitudes, sages and seers,
Poets and lovers of the truth of old,
Whereof all history is but the tale,
All legend but the rumor; and who still
Are vehement, and from old books and songs,
From saga or from chronicle, cry out,
Across the ever-widening gulf of time
And the unfathomable night, such words
Of courage and assurance as they may,

To us who follow after—breathing back
A fading music from the fields of death.
They, too, knew the good earth and the glad sun,
The trembling kiss, the infinite farewell;
The lips of longing and the breasts of life
Were sweet to them, who grieved even as we,
Loved and were loved as we are, laughed and sighed,
And had their hour of happiness; they, too,
Asked the old questions—and, like us, in vain;
Were troubled or were sorrowful. But now
To them the moonlight and the starlight are
Less than a voice in a forgotten dream,
At morning, or a flower cast away—
So deep the oblivion that wraps them round,
So dark the night that hides them. They sleep well;
They take their fill of sleep; they have their rest,
As once, in the beginning, ere the womb
Had travailed that conceived them.

And us, too,
The lonely and inevitable voice
Shall summon, and the silence gather home.
All shall be gathered homeward—he that sang
And he that listened; the lover and the loved,
The lips that pleaded and the hands that blessed,
Lie mingled in the darkness, and these hearts
That beauty haunted be a little dust
Blown round the narrow margins of the world;
We shall be one with the revolving planet
Throughout the ages, till the earth itself,
With all its millions, all its sleeping sons,
Pass, like a cinder, down the Void, or mix
With the primeval fires casting up
The foam of future worlds along the dark.
Perpetual death, perpetual rebirth,
Perpetual passion and perpetual pain!

Is there no respite from the wheel of things?
Is there no refuge from eternity?
The heavens grow old, and hunger for their peace;
The father founts, Antares and Arcturus,
Vega, and Sirius, and the nursling flames—
Ceaselessly dying, ceaselessly reborn—
Tire of the one tune, and find no way
Out of the woven web of space and time,
In which the worlds are tangled; but all move
Through the fierce throes and cycles of rebirth
Laboriously, with groaning forces held
In iron bondage, to the eternal rhythm,
Whose meaning and whose end we may not guess.

What word of courage may I bring to you,
What word of solace or of sustenance?
Our faiths have fallen from us and left us bare;
The dream, fantastic and compassionate,
That like a veil of love and glory hung
Between us and the bitterness of things,
Is lifted, and the universe has grown
Vaster, and much more lonely. Nor shall Thought—
Crying into the dark, and listening, listening—
Find any answer to her prayer: the night
Is soundless, and the starry mouths are sealed.

Yet the deep heart still knows that all is well
And the truth greater than we dare to dream—
Greater and more exalted! Though the mind,
Fashioned for humbler uses, may not grasp
The meaning of the mystery; though Thought—
For all her longing, all her labor—gain
Hardly the comfort of a hope, there is
A self within us, wiser than the mind,
And deeper than all thought, that still endures
Firm at the helm through all the storms of chance

Forever, in unquenchable belief
And courage not to be abated: life,
In wrath and fear, in love and agony,
Weaving her splendor from the dust of death,
Bears in her breast—though inarticulate—
A holier confidence; her running grass,
Her herds trampling the uplands, her fierce wills
In bush or brake, her ravening hosts that throng
The fields of ocean and the aisles of air—
Furious, furious, for continuance—
These answer, these bear witness, all is well;
These in indomitable joy affirm
The wonder and glory of a universe
Wherein all lusts, all hungers, all defeats,
All agonies, are woven to one Doom,
Somehow sublime, somehow magnificent;
And every heart-beat is an act of faith
Praising the hidden purpose!

Stern, indeed,
Are the realities: the wheel of heaven
Revolves, with all its motions, and the planet
Heaves forward blindly, bearing us along
Into the Void—we know not why nor where;
Embattled between two oblivions
We stand, for a brief moment, and lift up
Our faces to the light—but in our blood
The voices of the generations past
Strive, and the generations still unborn
Are urgent in us that we play our part,
As actors in a stately tragedy,
To some triumphant close. Courage and faith,
These are most needful. Surely they shall avail!
Surely they have the truth! And as for Him
Whom we have sought beyond the stars in vain,
Perhaps He may be nearer than we know.

II

How little our true majesty is shown
  In these proud minds by which we are confessed
  Traitors so often, recreants at best—
Unworthy of life's greatness and our own:
Not by the mind we shall be judged alone,
  Who are much more than in the mind is guessed—
  By faith we live, the heart in every breast
Labors, believing, toward the end unknown.

Through the shrill mind, in terror or defeat,
  The ancient flood of holy being roars;
    The gallant heart, again and yet again—
Jetting fierce streams of faith—with every beat,
  In sacramental affirmation, pours
    Life's answer through the unbelieving brain.

III

"And yet at last, when all is said and done,
  Where is the triumph, truly—to have been
  Spectators of an immemorial scene,
And then hurried into oblivion?"
So speaks the mind, self-cheated, while the one
  Splendor, in every mind however mean,
  Works out its purpose, secret and serene—
And through all living things under the sun.

His presence is the starry multitude,
  And in us also, surely, He abides:
Our bodies are salt shores for the sharp flood
  That through creation rises and subsides,
  With ebb and flow of everlasting tides,
Or rhythms of the perishable blood.

IV

Poor timid mind, so agile to defend
  Your own misgiving, patient to put out
  The light of hope within us and without,
Your own best lover and your own worst friend—
While over us the faithful heavens bend,
  While through our veins the justling life-streams shout
  Triumph and joy, still pondering the old doubt—
Anxious and unpersuaded to the end!

If it be truth indeed that life, through you,
  Who are the front of her emergent will,
    Waking, asks for an answer, and, denied,
Resumes the primal sleep—if this be true,
  Dark is the truth. But we are greater still
    Than our own thoughts, and wiser than our pride.

THE WOVEN DOOM

We are all woven of the one weaving,
Flower and bird and beast and tree:
The gray kingfisher and the trout,
The toad that spreads a tiny hand
On the earth's carpet quietly—
Heaven, shaken with storm and thunder,
Clouds and great waters, winds and snows,
The starry firmament, the grieving
Heart of man; through earth and sea,
The moth, the tiger, and the rose,
Flower and planet—strand on strand—
The wandering threads wind in and out,
With warp and woof, over and under,
Weaving the ancient unity.

We are all woven in one story—
One legend, like a sorrow, runs

Through creeds and crowns and buried wars,
Prophets and saviours crucified,
Great fortresses, and cities, once
Crowded, now crumbled and forsaken,
Captains and kings of old that spread
Their sails upon the sea: one glory
Speaks through them all—through swords and guns,
Battles and dreams, and hearts that bled,
Lovers, or rulers in their pride,
Desolate lands, and the lone stars
That by the wind of Time are shaken,
And thronging worlds and flaming suns.

We are all passing on together,
In darkness, to the end unknown—
Through all the ways and days of earth:
The thief, the ploughman and the seer,
The dog, the emperor on his throne,
The eyes, bowed over eyes unseeing,
The dying face, the broken heart,
To the one end are moving, whether
Evil or good—but not alone.
Each in the other has a part.
Each, as he may, in hope or fear,
Love, lust, or labor, death or birth,
Works out the will of the One Being—
For One is all, and all are One.

NEW POEMS

(1936)

TO EDWARD SHELDON

SPIRIT AND REALITY

Silence, silence—and trembling. Not a sound.
The arch of heaven is heavy with its stars.
This is the universe of life and death,
The sole Reality, the shining All.

How many generations now are dust,
That looked upon this thing! How many more
Shall look upon you, everlasting truth,
After these eyes are sealed! And shall you burn,
Altered no whit, over me altered? No—
For the brief spirit that regards you here
Gives glory to your light. O trembling flames,
Reticent loveliness, august design!
You lived in me, and here in me you die,
Losing once more the meaning of yourself.

THE ANSWER

Toward dawn I came awake hearing a crow,
Perched on the roof-tree, lift his guttural cry
Twice on the shaken air of morning. No
Caw, answering, made reply.
The wood shivered, a wind began to sigh
Among the boughs already growing bare,
As drowsily I waited—and once more
That raucous question shook the vacant air.
Silence settled back slowly, as before.
I turned to sleep; I heard, half-waking there,
His harsh, vehement caw lifted again.
The frosty dawn was silent on the hill,
Silence over the listening wood—and then,
Faintly, from far away,
The answer came. Morning flowed into day.
All was still.

SILENCE

(IN MEMORY OF MY FATHER)

There is a mystery too deep for words;
The silence of the dead comes nearer to it,
Being wisest in the end. What word shall hold
The sorrow sitting at the heart of things,
The majesty and patience of the truth!
Silence will serve; it is an older tongue:
The empty room, the moonlight on the wall,
Speak for the unreturning traveller.

TOGETHER

On the old garden-seat that fronts the grove
His hands had planted, years gone by,
At dusk I sat, remembering one I love—
We had sat there together often, he and I;
And were together now, although no word was said—
I looked away into the quiet air,
Knowing that while no word was said
I still might have him there.

EVENING

Nothing has altered the slow ritual
Of evening, in this country: her clear stars
Come quietly forever, and the sea
Has the same sound along the breathing shore.
The wind that sighed among the hemlock branches
Grows vaguer with the dusk; and in the house
The lamps are lit, and there are faces there
That time has made familiar, though one face
Is missing now, time will not bring again—
And one is newly welcomed. Earth sends up

Her voice of dreamy love out of the dark—
One voice in many voices. Gradual night.
Silence. The sorrowful mystery of things
Flows on forever. A little hoot-owl comes
Crying about the house his timorous cry,
His tender cry, that once you loved so well.

FINALE

When death has carved me to his stern design
  And of this self only the shell endures,
If any face look down with love on mine,
  Belovèd, may it be yours.

In that bleak autumn, when the boughs are bare
  And all sweet summers fled beyond recall,
Lean down your lips, my darling, and give me there
  One kiss—the last of all.

THAT FLEET FOOT

I am in love with the impossible:
  From the beginning, I have sought to bring
  Into the toils of language the fierce thing
No word may gather and no tongue may tell—
And it was in this room that first the spell
  Was cast upon me for a curse, to wring
  My heart in labor and in suffering,
Under these rafters that I love so well.

How many a night, how many a lonely year,
  With mind grown bitter and with blood gone dry,
    I have wrought these cunning toils! Nevertheless,
    All longing was repaid, all bitterness,
In moments when my heart stood still to hear,
  Even for a moment, that fleet foot go by.

BENISON

There is a star that shines more fair
Than any on the evening air,
So near and yet so far away
Is the soft brightness of its ray,
Fallen on one whose morning-dream
Has faded into dusk—a beam
From the high beauty that burns on
When all the evening stars are gone.

RECONCILIATION

At the foot of a great pine, in the wild country
Westward, well inland, we uncovered them,
The skeletons of a fish-hawk and a fish,
Half-buried in dead leaves. The long pursuit,
And the flight, ended; the terror, the conquest, ended,
And the wars that divide Being, they rested there—
Emblems of the inexplicable will.

CHRISTMAS EVE

(BACH'S MELODY FOR THE G STRING)

Slowly the evening darkened on our sight—
  The holy winter evening—the gay tree,
  That we had decked together festively,
Glittered and trembled with a starry light.
The hour of love and joy had taken flight,
  The laughter and the kiss were quenched and we
  Lost in the silence of our reverie,
When that grave music dawned upon the night.

And all the heart divines but cannot say,
  The tragedy we move in, for a brief
Moment lay bare—Time's mask was torn away:

Two phantoms borne upon a fatal tide,
We listened, while out of the centuries there cried
The ancient sorrow, the immortal grief.

NEW YORK
(EMPIRE STATE TOWER)

From this sheer tower, as from time's parapet,
My life looks back upon the world I know—
The desert where man's hope goes to and fro,
The iron ways in which his feet are set.
Oh, hope unquenchable—what blood, what sweat,
Fashioned this thing! What timeless sorrows flow
Beneath these towers and battlements that show
The heart of life indomitable yet!

Here is my world: these are the ways that knew
My spirit in her joy, the haunts that wore
The garment of her bitterness; you, too,
Belovèd, amid these millions in full flood,
Move somewhere, far from me—seem mine no more,
Made one now with the nameless multitude.

THE LETTER

The night is measureless, no voice, no cry,
Pierces the dark in which the planet swings—
It is the shadow of her bulk that flings
So deep a gloom on the enormous sky;
This timorous dust, this phantom that is I,
Cowers in shelter, while the evening brings
A sense of mystery and how all things
Waver like water and are gliding by.

Now, while the stars in heaven like blowing sand
Drift to their darkness, while oblivion
Hushes the fire of some fading sun,

I turn the page again—and there they stand,
Traced by love's fleeting but victorious hand,
The words: "My darling, my belovèd one."

RESOLUTE SILENCE

In your stern mien I read it, in the high, inflexible air
And resolute silence that the dead,
Even for those they have loved, are used to wear—
The secret fallen between us, the strange new thing unsaid.

It is evening: the first, tremulous stars come into view,
That you praised so well; while I, who watch here, caught
In the web you have broken, probe the old secrets we two
Warred on once with the spears of thought.

And it is as if you had deserted, gone over to these
That are leagued in their silence against us. You, too, in the end,
Sealed your lips, and are one now with the unforgiving mysteries—
Who were my friend.

OBSESSION

Toward evening the old house wakes to a frail
And tenuous music while the cricket sings
Unendingly of unremembered things—
A song as drowsy as a traveller's tale:
Autumn comes early, the cold light is pale
Along the rafter where the hornet clings
With heavy body and forgetful wings,
And from the shelf the spider hangs her veil.

By candle-light, in the accustomed chair,
I sit, still weaving webs for the wild thought
That never yet in any web was caught,
Of woven words, or net of tangled rhyme—
I know, and that the years shall find me there,
Toiling in hope until the end of time.

PRAYER TO THE SUN

My Father,
Here for a moment in your light I stand,
And feel upon my lifted face
Your touch, your touch, as of a father's hand.
Shine down upon me. See,
It is so little and so brief a thing
That drinks your light, remembering
The dark that was, the dark that is to be—
So soon to be again.
Oh, let your glance fall tenderly and mild!
Have pity now; and when
The night has taken me, have pity then,
Father, on me, your child.

I, TOO! I, TOO!

Wild geese, wild geese, arrowing down the sky,
Hastening, hastening, where the heavens are bare!
I, too, would flee away—I know not why;
I, too, would hasten—but I know not where.

CONTEMPLATION

These are the hours of darkness wont to bring
The somber revelation: heaven betrays
Her very secret now—the starry maze,
The forest of the worlds, where death is king.
Behold the stately truth! Half-worshipping,
Half-doubtful, the poor spirit stands at gaze,
With her few, brief, and lamentable days,
Under the silence of that shining thing.

O everlasting fires and thrones of light,
A greater than yourselves confronts you here:
I dwelt among you; you abide in me.

I go—but, going, take into the night
That other heaven, where you shone so clear
And lovelier than in reality.

LULLABY

Night comes on—
Night, and the peace you have desired.
Earth is calling, you are tired;
Earth draws you down.

The hope, the fear,
The labor, vain—your heart grows cold.
Time's secret is untold.
The light fails, that led you here.

Sleep, then—sleep is best:
The roads are many where we go astray;
All, all, by the one way
Come home, at the one heart have rest.

UNISON

(FOR PHYLLIS DE KAY BURY)

There is a secret that the sober mood
Of science misses, it will not be bought
By the contriving mind however shrewd—

Within the cell, within the atom sought,
Within the inner center's whirling rings,
Sits the demonic joy that laughs at thought

And is the face behind the mask of things
And is the measure of the choric dance,
The music of the song creation sings.

Who shall unweave the web of Circumstance,
Or trace the pattern in the fugitive
And shifting tapestry of change and chance?

Or, having learned the pattern, who shall give
The answer then? What answer has been given
Ever, to any man, why man should live!

Not in the flesh, not in the spirit even,
Not in the cunning of the brain that rides
In mastery upon the roads of heaven,

Or charts the rhythm of the starry tides,
The answer and the truth are found, but where,
Deep at the very core, the Stranger bides—

And pours his courage through the heart's despair,
And works his healing in the body's wound,
And sheds his glory through the spirit. There

The answer is, the wisdom shall be found,
Which is the answer of the greening tree,
Which is the wisdom of the fruitful ground—

A wisdom older and more wise than we,
Dumb with a secret difficult to tell,
And inarticulate with mystery,

For, to define it, were a miracle.
Oh, not in the low moments but the great
The exultant rhythm is made audible

That sways the music at the heart of Fate,
To which Time in his passage and return
Moves, and the burdened heavens, with their weight

Of suns and planets, are moving as they burn—
The harmony in which all modes are bent
To the one meaning that they all must learn,

Of many and divergent meanings blent,
Of motions intricate and manifold,
With various voices weaving one consent!

Nor is it easy for the mind to hold
The extreme joy of things, or bear for long
The exalted beauty, hidden from of old,

Whose sure intent, immutable and strong,
Secret and tireless and undeterred,
Moves through the mazes of the winding song—

And whosoever in his heart has heard
That music, all his life shall toil to say
The passion of it. But there is no word—

No words are made for it. There is no way.

SALUTATION

You, perhaps yet unborn, that some day shall read these rhymes—
  Know, that I was a man even as yourself, and from the womb
  Issued in nakedness; also, that I suffered the doom
Common to all men, and that I pondered these things many times—

And ceased. So shall you cease: brief are the days and few.
  I have made these songs, that we for a moment might partake
  Of the one dream. This is my spirit, offered for your sake.
Eat, drink; this is my spirit, given for you.

It is night, and we are alone together: your head
Bends over the open book, your feeding eyes devour
The substance of my dream. O sacred hour
That makes us one—you, fleeting, and I, already fled!

Here is my love, here is my sorrow, my heart's rage,
Poured out for you. What tenderness brooding above you
Hallows these songs! I have made them all for you. I love you.
What love, what longing, my brother, speaks to you from this page!

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NUMBER OF VOLUMES.—Any reasonable request for books will be granted if applicant wishes them for study or for relending and books are not needed elsewhere.

TIME KEPT.—Books must be received at State Library within 28 days from date of loan. They may be renewed for the same period, upon request, unless reserved for other borrowers. Date upon which books will be due in library is given on notice of shipment. Some books will be issued for shorter periods and may not be renewed, and some collections for schools and clubs are lent for eight weeks.

FINES.—A fine of one cent a day must be paid for books kept, without renewal, beyond period for which loan is made. Notice will be sent when books are five days overdue without having been renewed. No book will be lent to anyone who has failed to meet the obligations of borrowers as given in these rules.

LOST AND INJURED BOOKS MUST BE PAID FOR.—The number of pieces lent is given on notification postal and borrowers are held responsible for this number unless notice of shortage or error is sent immediately upon receipt of package.

BOOKS MUST NOT BE MARKED, MUST BE KEPT CLEAN, AND CORNERS OF LEAVES MUST NOT BE TURNED DOWN.